# Forts and Ports of Sindh

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## Table of Contents

**Preface**

1. Agham Kot
2. Ali Garh Fort
3. Aror Port
4. Babur Loi Fort
5. Bakkar Port
6. Bhambore Port
7. Bhamkot Fort
8. Bhit Dethri Port
9. Brahmanabad Fort
10. Chakar Fort
11. Chanro Kot
12. Dahleel Fort
13. Debal Port
14. Dughh Bala Fort
15. Ghorabari
16. Ghulam Shah’s Tomb Fort
17. Gulan Kot
18. Harar Fort
19. Hyderabad Fort (Pakko Qilo)

20. Imamgarh Fort
21. Jabo Kot
22. Kacho Qila Hyderabad
23. Kalankot Fort
24. Karachi Port
25. Karo Kot
26. Kashmore Port
27. Keti Bandar
28. Kharo Kot
29. Khudaabad Fort
30. Kot Diji Fort
31. Kot Gulam Shah Fort
32. Lahari Bandar: (Jakhi Bandar)
33. Luni Kot
34. Malaki Kot
35. Manora Fort
36. Mansurah Port
37. Marot Bandar
38. Meena Nagar
39. Nandkot
40. Nasarpur Port
41. Naukot Fort
42. Nerun Kot
43. Oranga Bandar
44. Pari Nagar
45. Patal Port
46. Patala
47. Rahmki Bazaar

48. Rakhan Bandar
49. Ranikot
50. Rano Kot
51. Raor Fort
52. Rato Kot (Sanghar)
53. Rohri Port
54. Samoi
55. Sarni Kot
56. Sehwan Fort
57. Shah Bandar
58. Sukkur Port
59. Sundri Fort
60. Tando Allahyar Fort
61. Umerkot Fort
62. Unar Kot (Kiryen Kot)
63. Venjhar
64. Wajrot Port
65. Wakhar Bandar

# Preface

## A Voice Born from the Silent Testimony of History

Sindh—a land where every grain of soil bears witness to history, where the winds echo the calls of ancient civilizations, and where the silence of walls, bastions, and harbors holds centuries of buried stories. For thousands of years, this region has remained a center of civilization, trade, resistance, and thought. The passage of time may have obscured many sites, but the soil of Sindh has refused to forget—and now, this book seeks to revive those forgotten voices through the power of the pen.

*Forts and Ports of Sindh* is an intellectual, cultural, and emotional journey that leads the reader into the grandeur of Sindh’s forts, the breath of its maritime harbors, and the architectural, administrative, and cultural contexts of these historic sites. This book offers not only historical knowledge but also illuminates the brilliance of construction, the intricacies

of defensive strategies, and the vibrant hues of local traditions.

Sindh’s forts, citadels, and ports are silent witnesses of history. Within their crumbling walls echo the labor of generations. These sites breathe with the living pulse of Sindh’s past. They are witnesses to triumphs and defeats—where the smiles and tears of ancestors, the echoes of toil, and the imprints of civilization remain preserved.

Forts, citadels, and harbors are living symbols of Sindh’s collective consciousness. They are not merely relics for future generations, but custodians of Sindh’s resistant history, cultural continuity, and intellectual legacy. Within their walls lie the echoes of effort, the traces of sorrow, and the marks of victory. Every tower, every gate, and every harbor is a story—one this book strives to deliver straight to the reader’s heart.

## Core Objectives of the Book

### 1. Scholarly Review of Historical, Cultural, and Administrative Contexts

To examine the construction, usage, and governance of Sindh’s forts and ports through historical documents, archaeological evidence, and oral traditions.

**2. Critical Interpretation of Architecture and Defensive Strategies**
To highlight the architectural styles, strategic placement of bastions, and the depth of military planning embedded in these structures.

**3. Emphasizing the Commercial, Cultural, and Maritime Importance of Ports**
To explore the global trade networks, cultural exchanges, and maritime strategies that made Sindh’s ports vital nodes in regional and international history.

**4. Reinterpreting Forgotten Sites**
To breathe new life into neglected locations through the lens of folklore, oral narratives, and archaeological remnants.

**5. Investigating the Eras and Patrons of Construction**
To trace the historical periods and ruling figures responsible for the construction

of these forts, and to understand their political motives.

**6. Refuting False Claims of Ownership**
To challenge and disprove fabricated claims regarding the ownership of these forts using scholarly and scientific evidence.

**7. Exposing Historical Distortions and Deceit**
To confront the manipulations, misrepresentations, and deceptions surrounding Sindh’s history with academic integrity and cultural clarity.

This book is a call—from the soil of Sindh, from its spirit, and from those walls that have remained silent for centuries but still breathe today. It invites the reader to connect with these sites not only historically, but emotionally and culturally, so that Sindh’s heritage may live on through future generations.

*—Ruk Sindhi*

Karachi, Sindh, 2025

## Agham Kot

### Importance in the Political History of Ancient Sindh

Agham Kot is mentioned as an important city in the ancient political geography of Sindh. According to historical accounts, the city existed even before the advent of Islam, and **Raja**

**Agham Lohano** ruled this region, belonging to the Lohano tribe. Some historical traditions also suggest that the city was associated with the political and administrative system of the **province of Brahmanabad**. (doam.gov.pk)

Ancient historical sources such as *Chach Nama* and *Tuhfat-ul-Kiram* mention Agham Kot, indicating that it was one of the administrative and political centers of ancient Sindh. (doam.gov.pk)

## A Center of Learning after the Islamic Conquest

After the arrival of the Arabs in Sindh, Agham Kot became an important center of Islamic learning and culture. According to traditions, during the period of **Muhammad bin Qasim**, mosques were established here, which became an important foundation for the spread of Islamic culture in Sindh.

During the **Samma dynasty (1350–1524 CE)**, Agham Kot developed into one of the major centers of learning in Sindh. Historical traditions state that hundreds of madrasas and thousands of

students were present here, and after Thatta it was considered the second most important center of Islamic education.

## Commercial and Economic Importance

One of the major reasons for the development of Agham Kot was its geographical location. The city was situated along an old course of the Indus River, which made it an important center for riverine trade. Transportation of goods through the river was easy, which helped expand commercial activities in the area. (en.wikipedia.org)

Historical sources indicate that Agham Kot served as a center of trade, agriculture, and cultural interaction in southern Sindh, where merchants from different regions frequently arrived.

## A Sufi and Religious Center

Agham Kot also holds an important place in the history of Sufism. The site contains several shrines of saints and

mystics, among which the shrine of **Makhdoom Muhammad Ismail Soomro** is particularly famous. During the Samma period, this saint established a madrasa here where hundreds of students received education.

In addition, the shrine of **Bibi Maham (Khadijah bint Imam Musa Kazim)** is also located in Agham Kot. According to local traditions, it dates back to the Arab period and is considered one of the ancient religious sites of Sindh.

## Cultural and Archaeological Importance

The archaeological site of Agham Kot spreads over approximately **200 acres**, containing various mounds, mosques, graveyards, and remains of a fort. Artifacts discovered from the site include pottery, terracotta toys, decorated tiles, and copper coins dating from the **8th to the 13th century CE**.

These remains indicate that Agham Kot was once a large urban center where religious, educational, and commercial activities coexisted.

## Decline and Destruction

The decline of Agham Kot began in the **18th century**. According to some historians, the Afghan invader **Madad Khan Pathan** destroyed the city. Other researchers believe that changes in the course of the Indus River caused the city to lose its commercial importance, which led the inhabitants to migrate to other cities such as Hyderabad and Thatta.

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# Ali Garh Fort

## Introduction

In the history of Sindh, the construction of forts in the Thar region by the Mirs was a strategic move to consolidate their rule. Among these, *Ali Garh Fort* emerged not only as a defensive structure but also as a symbol of political control over the rebellious Sodha tribes.

## Construction and Architecture

Built in 1800 AD by Mir Fateh Ali Khan in the village of Chelhar:

- **Structure**:
  - Walls: 25 feet high, 6 feet thick

    - Materials: Double-layered baked bricks with mud filling
    - Area: Approximately 80x1000 square feet
    - Cost: Estimated at 800,000 rupees
    - Facilities: Grain storage, gunpowder depot, well for water, barracks for soldiers

## Military and Political Significance

The fort was constructed to suppress Sodha resistance in northeastern Thar:

- Garrison: 100 soldiers and 2 officers
- In 1815 AD, Sodhas led by *Rawat Sodha* attacked the fort
- Mirs retaliated, killed Rawat, and subdued surrounding villages
- Result: Local Thakurs became loyal to the Mirs

## Historical References

- **Muhammad Ismail Arsani**, in *Seer-e-Rigistan*, briefly notes:

“After Khade and Singharai, a fort was built in Chelhar in 1800.”

- **Raichand Harijan**, in *Tareekh-e-Rigistan*, gives limited detail, but *Daily Mehran* (16 Nov 1958) states:

  “Remnants of Ali Garh Fort are still visible in Chelhar, 20 miles from Mithi. A primary school and English classes now operate within the fort, with a majority Hindu population.”

## Social and Cultural Impact

- The fort curtailed Sodha raids and established Mir authority
- A deputy revenue officer (Naib Kardar) was stationed for tax collection
- Mirs claimed 2/5 of land produce; local chiefs received four annas per field
- Iron cannonballs found in and around the fort are now used in strength contests by local youth

## Conclusion

Ali Garh Fort stands as a testament to the Mirs' strategic foresight in Thar. Its construction, military role, and socio-political influence mark it as a pivotal chapter in Sindh's desert history. Further research and documentation can deepen our understanding of its legacy.

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- Oral accounts from residents of Chelhar and Mithi.

# Aror Port

The Indus River has always been the lifeline of Sindh. Settlements and civilizations flourished along its banks, and with every shift in its course, prosperity and decline followed. Among the many historic centers that emerged, Aror stands out as a remarkable city and port that once served as the political, cultural, and commercial hub of Sindh (Shaikh, 1995). This article explores the historical significance, commercial role, and eventual decline of Aror.

## Geographical and Cultural Background

Aror is located about five miles southeast of Rohri, on a hillock. Its

proximity to the Indus River made it an active port and a hub of trade. Scholars suggest that the city originated during the Indus valley Civilization period and was later expanded by the Vedic peoples, who recognized its strategic position and developed it into a thriving settlement (Memon, 2001).

## Early History

During the Vedic era, Aror was ruled by Queen Romasa, a renowned patron of music (Shoro, 1985). References in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* indicate that Aror was the capital of Sindh during these epic periods. Under the Chandravanshi and Suryavanshi dynasties, the city reached its political and economic zenith.

## Alexander and the Era of Moesicanus

When Alexander the Great invaded Sindh via the Indus River, Aror appeared as an important port. At that time, its ruler was Moesicanus, who fiercely resisted Alexander (Arrian, 1893/1971). Greek historians described Aror as a prosperous and fertile city, with people skilled in medicine and arts (McCrindle, 1973).

## Chachnama and the Arab Period

According to the *Chachnama*, Aror was the seat of power in Sindh, ruled by King Sahasi and later by Raja Dahir (Baladhuri, 1916/1968). When Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Sindh, he allowed the people of Aror to retain their property and freedom, recognizing their role as artisans, farmers, and traders, who were essential for the economy (Al-Baladhuri, 1968).

## Mughal and Arghun Period

During the Mughal era, Aror continued to hold significance. Both Shaikh Abu'l Fazl and Mir Ma'sum Bukhari described it as a city comparable to Multan, surrounded by gardens, palaces, and canals (Bukhari, 1590/2002). Under the Arghuns, a military cantonment was established there, further emphasizing its administrative importance.

## Intellectual and Commercial Importance

Aror was not only a commercial hub but also a center of knowledge and scholarship. Scholars such as Qazi Ismail and Qazi Muhammad Ismail bin Ali contributed significantly to Sindh's

intellectual heritage. It was here that *Minhaj al-Masalik*, the earliest known history of Sindh in Arabic, was written and later translated into Persian as *Futuhnama*, also known as *Chachnama* (Memon, 2001). Economically, Aror was a major market for grain, crafts, and trade.

## Causes of Decline

By the 4th century Hijri, the Indus River shifted its course, depriving Aror of its lifeline. As commerce and agriculture depended on the river, the city gradually declined. The Arabs later shifted their capital to Mansura, leading to Aror’s gradual desertion. Today, the once-great city has been reduced to a small village (Shaikh, 1995).

## Conclusion

Aror represents a glorious chapter in Sindh’s history. It was not merely a political capital but also a flourishing hub of trade, culture, and knowledge. Its decline was tied to natural changes in the Indus River, yet its legacy continues to live in the cultural memory of Sindh.

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# Babur Loi Fort

## Introduction

Fortresses have held a vital place in Sindh’s historical heritage, serving not only as military strongholds but also as political and cultural centers. The Babur Loi Fort, located in the city of Babur Loi in Khairpur Mirs District, is a significant example of this legacy, now standing in a dilapidated state.

## Architectural Structure

The fort is constructed from mud bricks and clay, with walls approximately 10 feet thick and 15 to 20 feet high. Covering an area of about four acres, the fort’s scale suggests it was built to meet local defensive needs (Ansari, 2012).

## Historical Background

According to local traditions, the fort existed even before the arrival of Mughal Emperor Nasiruddin Babur in Sindh, indicating its antiquity. Although scholarly research on the fort remains limited, its structure resembles other military forts found across Sindh (Shaikh, 2008).

## Current Condition and Risks

Residential encroachment within the fort has severely damaged its original architecture. Bricks have been removed from the walls to install doors, and rainwater and drainage have eroded the foundations, posing a risk of collapse (Memon, 2019). The Department of Archaeology has not installed any signage or informational boards, reflecting administrative neglect.

## Preservation Recommendations

- Relocate internal residents to alternative housing to protect the fort’s original structure.
- Install signage, historical information, and initiate preservation efforts through the Department of Archaeology.
- Launch research initiatives exploring the fort’s historical significance through oral traditions, architectural analysis, and visual documentation.

## Conclusion

Babur Loi Fort is a vital part of Sindh’s historical heritage and requires urgent preservation. It reflects not only the

military strategies of the past but also the architectural artistry of Sindh. Through restoration and research, the fort can help elevate Sindh’s historical identity on a global stage.

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# Bakkar Port

## Introduction

Bakkar, located on the banks of the Indus River, was an important port and commercial hub that held central significance in various political, economic, and cultural eras. This city not only served as the capital of Upper Sindh but was also recognized as a major trading marketplace. Following the decline of Aror, Bakkar witnessed significant growth in crafts, industry, and trade, particularly under the Mughal Empire (Bal Krishan, 1924).

## Commercial Significance of Bakkar

During the Mughal period, the annual revenue of Bakkar was recorded as approximately 114,947 dams, with one

rupee equaling 40 dams (Bal Krishan, 1924). Its trade was not confined to the Indian subcontinent but extended to Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia. One of the most significant trade routes connected Bakkar to Qandahar and Turkmenistan through the Bolan Pass (Bal Krishan, 1924).

The Portuguese traveler Sebastian described Bakkar as a fertile city surrounded by gardens, where the markets were constantly filled with goods and people (Sebastian, 1605). Similarly, Manrique (1641) noted the abundance of fruit due to its flourishing orchards and observed annual camel caravans transporting goods to Iran and Khorasan.

## Industry and Production

Bakkar was a key center of textile production in Sindh. The city produced fine-quality cloth and was also renowned for the manufacture of military weapons, including inexpensive yet high-quality swords (Salbank, 1659). Furthermore, Bakkar was famous for its dairy production, particularly butter, ghee, and milk, as noted by British agents (British Records, 1838).

## Intellectual and Religious Significance

Alongside trade, Bakkar held a prominent position in religious and intellectual traditions. Eminent scholars and saints such as Hazrat Nuh Bakhri, Syed Muhammad Makki, and Shah Sadruddin Khatib imparted religious knowledge in the city. During his visit to Sindh in 1314 CE, Ibn Battuta praised the scholars of Bakkar and admired their learning (Ibn Battuta, 1929). During the Samma dynasty, Bakkar was referred to as *Mubarak of Firishta* and was regarded as a spiritual hub for mystics and saints (Firishta, 1609).

## Geographical Context

In earlier times, Bakkar existed in the form of an island in the middle of the Indus River. The Bakkar fort, constructed during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid, served as a strategic defense against invasions from Punjab and northern India (Al-Baladhuri, 1866). Despite the shifting course of the river, the fortified terrain of Bakkar preserved its geographical importance (Elliot, 1867).

## Historical Conquests and Political Importance

Bakkar remained a frequent target of conquests. It was captured by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026 CE, by Iltutmish in 1277 CE, by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in 1330 CE, and by Firoz Shah Tughlaq in 1351 CE and again in 1370 CE. Later, Jam Nindo (1490 CE) also took control of the city. Under the Mughals, Bakkar was elevated into a full-fledged province divided into eight administrative units (Elliot, 1867). In 1838, the British borrowed the fort of Bakkar from Mir Nasir Khan, where they established a significant artillery depot that dated back to the Kalhora period (British Records, 1838).

## Conclusion

Bakkar Port played a vital role in the history, trade, politics, and intellectual life of Sindh. It stood not only as a commercial and political center but also as a hub of scholarly and Sufi traditions. Its fertile environment, fragrant flowers, flourishing orchards, and scenic location on the Indus rendered Bakkar one of the most significant landmarks of Sindh.

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# Bhambore Port

## Introduction

In the history and civilization of Sindh, the name Bhambore stands out as a significant cultural and economic hub. It not only served as a vital center of commerce and politics but also became

a source of romantic and literary traditions. The famous Sindhi folktale *Sassi Punnu* is closely associated with Bhambore, further highlighting its cultural importance (Shiddai, 1956).

## Geographical Location and Etymology

Bhambore was located along the western branch of the Indus River, known as *Gharo*, near the northern bank of the Arabian Sea's creek. It was one of the busiest and most flourishing ports of its time. According to local tradition, the city was named after a ruler called "Bhamborae." Other historians, such as Gangara Samrat, suggest that the Berber community from Africa settled here, and the city was initially named *Barbarike*, which later evolved into Bhambore (Samrat, 1938).

## Commercial Significance of Bhambore

From the early Christian centuries until the 11th century CE, Bhambore remained one of the most important trading centers of Sindh and India. Goods from inland Sindh were transported to Bhambore, from where

they were shipped across the seas to China, India, Rome, and other distant lands. During the Greek invasions, Bhambore was recognized as an international port. Chinese silk was exported to Rome through Bhambore along the famous Silk Route (Panhwar, 1974).

## Trade Commodities and Exchanges

Bhambore served as a hub for diverse goods, including:

- Cotton, fine muslin, silk, woolen fabrics, and spices.
- Precious stones, pearls, amber, ivory, indigo, timber, and gold.
- Imported items such as Shirazi perfumes, wines, dried fruits from Khorasan, Atlas of Sistan, carpets of Qalat, and silk garments from Kerman.

According to Pliny the Elder, Bhambore exported gems, carnelian, agate, ivory, and marble to Rome. Rome imported goods in such large quantities that Sindh annually received vast payments in gold, reportedly amounting to 55,000,000 *seer* (Panhwar, 1974).

## Cultural and Industrial Hub

Bhambore was not only a trade center but also an industrial and cultural hub. Large tanneries existed here where leather was dyed, and Bhambore was also famous for its high-quality sword-making industry. These swords were exported widely, especially to Arab countries (Shiddai, 1956). Moreover, Phoenician, Semitic, and Roman merchants used the Semitic script for trade records, written on cloth. Through Sindhi merchants, this script later influenced the Indian subcontinent during the reign of Emperor Ashoka (Samrat, 1938).

## Decline of Bhambore

Bhambore thrived until the Soomra period. However, in 171 AH / 787 CE, a devastating earthquake and the drying of the Indus branch *Gharo* led to its decline. Yaqut al-Hamawi records that Bhambore was one of the chief ports of Sindh, and Muhammad bin Qasim established a garrison and built a royal mosque there (Hamawi, 1898/1224). The once prosperous city of gardens, palaces, markets, and mansions gradually fell into ruins, leaving only

archaeological remains as evidence of its glorious past.

## Conclusion

Bhambore represents a vital chapter in the history of Sindh, reflecting not only the region’s economic prosperity but also its cultural grandeur and international trade relations. Its remains today continue to testify to Sindh’s rich heritage, offering valuable insight into the historic crossroads of civilizations.

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## Bhamkot Fort

Bhamkot, locally known as “Bham Jo Bharo,” is a significant archaeological site located approximately 35 kilometers from Nawabshah, along the Bandhi Road. Situated 7 kilometers west of Daur, near Amurji Wah and adjacent to the village of Abdul Razzaq Jamali, the mound lies within Deh Nusrat, Tapo Dahrhi, Taluka Nawabshah. According to official revenue records, the site spans roughly 40 acres and is surrounded by fertile agricultural land (Sindh Revenue Department, 2023).

Locals refer to the site by various names —“Bham Bharo,” “Bhango Bharo,” and “Gaarho Bharo” (Red Mound)—likely due to the abundance of red baked bricks, pottery shards, and reddish soil scattered across the area. The visual density of these materials suggests a once-thriving settlement with substantial architectural development.

## Historical Context and Speculative Identification

Some historians speculate that Bhamkot may be the ancient site referred to as “Bahroor,” one of the forts encountered by Muhammad bin Qasim during his campaign in Sindh in 712 CE. After capturing Rawar, Qasim advanced toward Brahmanabad, where Raja Dahar’s son was ruling. En route to Alor, Qasim reportedly seized two forts—Bahroor and Dahlila (possibly Dalil Dero)—which may correspond to the present-day Bhamkot (Abbasi, 2001; Memon, 2010).

While definitive identification remains elusive, the strategic location and fortified nature of Bhamkot support its possible role as a military outpost during early Islamic expansion in Sindh.

## Architectural Features and Fortification

The fort is enclosed by a nearly square perimeter of baked brick walls. The average thickness of the walls is approximately 6 feet, with both inner and outer faces constructed from baked bricks and the cavity between them filled with compacted mud. In some sections, unbaked bricks are also used, contributing to the structural integrity of the fort (Archaeology & Museums Department, 2015).

The southern wall measures 915 feet in length, while the east-west width is approximately 870 feet. The ruined walls and inner remnants still rise about 12 feet above the surrounding terrain, indicating that the fort was built atop an elevated mound. The brick dimensions—12×9×2 inches—are consistent with other fortified cities of Sindh such as Bhambhore and Mansura, suggesting a shared architectural tradition.

## Main Gateway and Defensive Bastions

On the eastern wall, two protruding semi-circular bastions are visible, positioned close together. This

configuration strongly suggests the location of the main entrance, which spans 17 feet in width. The gateway is flanked by two robust bastions made of baked bricks, designed to provide defensive coverage. Archaeological evidence indicates that the fort was constructed in two distinct phases, with signs of a large fire at the main gate during its final occupation phase (Archaeology & Museums Department, 2015).

## Peripheral Bastions and Interior Structures

Beyond the main entrance, the fort’s perimeter walls feature several defensive bastions at regular intervals. Many have been buried over time, but approximately 24 bastions remain visible today. Most are semi-circular and protrude outward from the wall. Inside and outside the fort walls, traces of numerous buildings are found across a large area. Unfortunately, many of these have been plowed over by local villagers using tractors, and the land has been converted into farmland (Sindh Heritage Watch, 2022).

The fort’s scale, defensive layout, and construction technique reflect a high

degree of planning and military foresight, making Bhamkot a valuable site for understanding Sindh’s early urban and strategic history.

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# Bhit Dethri Port

## Introduction

The Indus and Hakra valleys have remained the primary sources of ancient Sindh’s civilization and culture. The Hakra Valley, stretching from Bahawalpur Division in the north to Nagarparkar and Diplo in the south, holds immense historical, cultural, and commercial significance (Sindhi, 1963). Within this valley flourished several trading centers and ports, among which Bhit Dethri held a prominent position.

## Historical Background

Bhit Dethri, located nearly 12 miles west of Mirpur Mathelo, was once a thriving commercial and port city on the banks of the Hakra River. According to ancient traditions, the city was named after Raja

Detha, a relative of Raja Nand of Mathela (Yousfani, 1958). Another tradition suggests that it was named after a wealthy woman, “Dethi Mahani,” renowned for her generosity (Lambek, 1946).

## Commercial and Port Significance

During the flowing period of the Hakra River, Dethri emerged as a significant junction port. It connected Sindh with Multan, Punjab, Kashmir, and Jaisalmer through both riverine and overland trade. Caravans from Jaisalmer reached Dethri by land, while seaborne goods from the Gulf of Kutch arrived via Paringar (Sindhi, 1963). This dual connectivity made Dethri an essential hub for commerce, facilitating trade routes across the region.

## Cultural and Romantic References

Bhit Dethri is also embedded in Sindh’s folklore. In the legendary tale *Momal Rano*, the heroine Momal, along with her sister, settled in Dethri. With her immense wealth, she adorned and flourished the city. The site still preserves the historical memory of “Momal’s Well,” associated with the tragic romance (Lambek, 1946).

## Archaeological Findings and Research

In 1946, H. T. Lambrick conducted an excavation at Bhit Dethri and published his findings in the *Journal of the Sindh Historical Society*. Artifacts discovered included oval bricks, pottery fragments with geometric patterns, polished stones, and other objects resembling those from the Mature Harappan period (Flame, 1950). These findings demonstrate that Dethri was an integral part of Sindh’s ancient civilization and bore close ties with the Indus Valley traditions.

## Conclusion

Bhit Dethri port stands as a living testimony to the historical and commercial vitality of the Hakra Valley. It not only functioned as a major trade hub but also left a lasting imprint in Sindhi folklore and oral traditions. Although geographical changes and the desiccation of the Hakra River led to its decline and eventual abandonment, the surviving ruins continue to narrate the grandeur of Sindh’s past.

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# Brahmanabad Fort

## Introduction

Brahmanabad, is located in Deh 42 Jamrao of Taluka Jam Nawaz Ali, District Sanghar, Sindh. The ruins cover approximately 45,000 square feet at coordinates 25°88′2″ N and 68°77′7″ E, with the mound rising up to 35 feet. This fortified city was one of the most significant urban centers of Sindh in the early medieval period.

## Historical Background

According to early Persian and Arab chronicles, Ardashir Bahman of Iran (226–241 AD) conquered Sindh and established this city in his own name. In the early fourth century, Brahman rulers renamed it “Brahmanabad.” For nearly

three centuries, it remained Sindh's commercial and political hub. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, returning from Somnath in 416 AH/1026 AD, attacked and burned the city, leading to its decline.

Arab historians such as **Al-Baladhuri** (*Futuh al-Buldan*) and **Al-Tabari** (*Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*) mention the conquest of Sindh and the establishment of Mansura as the provincial capital under Umayyad and Abbasid rule. Later, **Mir Ali Sher Qani** in *Tuhfatul Kiram* also recorded Brahmanabad's significance in Sindh's political history.

**Structure of the Fort**

The fort was central not only to the conquest of Sindh but also to campaigns across Hind. The entire city was settled within its walls, which were considered militarily impregnable. Chach, Dahir, Muhammad bin Qasim, and later Umayyad and Abbasid governors faced immense challenges in capturing it.

The fort's walls were at least 12 feet thick, with defensive positions half a furlong outside. Historical sources mention five gates—Jaritari, Baharand,

Satieh, Banora, and Salha—each flanked by towers and defensive structures. Semicircular towers, 14.5 feet in diameter and spaced 102 feet apart, still survive in their original form. Their lower portions were built of baked bricks, while the upper sections used lime mortar and unbaked bricks. An earthen embankment reinforced the foundations.

## Archaeology and Excavations

Excavations reveal four distinct construction phases, proving the fort's long-standing existence. Even after the Arab conquest of Sindh, Brahmanabad remained inhabited, with four phases of Arab-period construction discovered.

Archaeologists such as **Henry Cousens** (1929) documented the fort's ruins and towers, while **Ahmad Hasan Dani** and **Mohammed Rafique Mughal** highlighted its role as an Islamic urban center. Excavations by the **Department of Antiquities, Government of Sindh** uncovered coins, ceramics, and structural remains, confirming the city's prosperity.

## Cultural and Political Significance

Brahmanabad was not only a military stronghold but also a hub of trade and governance. Arab sources describe it as a center of administration, with mosques, markets, and residential quarters. Its strategic location made it vital for controlling Sindh’s riverine trade routes.

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## Chakar Fort

### Abstract

Chakar Fort, located in Shahpur Deh, Sanghar District, Sindh, was built around 1740 CE by Mir Chakar Khan Talpur for his patron Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro. The fort was not only a defensive stronghold but also a witness to cultural transformation over time. This article presents a scholarly review of its construction, administrative use, water system, cultural shifts, and current archaeological remains.

## 1. Introduction

Sindh’s historical forts served not only as administrative centers but also as reflections of military strategy, architectural innovation, and cultural evolution. Chakar Fort, commissioned by Mir Chakar Khan Talpur for Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, exemplifies the political and defensive priorities of the Kalhora dynasty (Sindhi Encyclopedia, n.d.).

## 2. Architectural Structure and Defensive Features

The fort was rectangular, covering approximately 4 acres.

- Walls were built with locally sourced mud, 20 feet thick at the base and rising up to 10 feet.
- An outer protective wall measured 2.6 feet thick and 5 feet high.
- The wide walls allowed horse carts and bullock carts to traverse.
- Four corner bastions existed, with two 16-foot diameter towers on the north and south sides for surveillance (Mehrān Journal, 2010).

## 3. Residences, Gates, and Entryways

There were two main gates:

- The southern gate was 30 feet wide and later reinforced with iron.
- A secondary gate was located near the northeastern corner adjacent to a watch post.
- The Talpurs built mud residences inside, with defensive niches (māra) beneath the parapets (Noor Sindhi, n.d.).

## 4. Water System and Canals

Three major canals flowed near the fort’s north and south sides:

- Rono, Aali, and Yaro canals originated from the Dad Canal.
- The Dad Canal flowed from the Indus River near Sakrand.
- These canals disappeared after the construction of Jamrao, Mithrao, and Rohri canals (Sindhi Encyclopedia, n.d.).

## 5. Cultural Transformation and Hindu Stewardship

After the fall of the Talpur dynasty, local Hindus took over the fort’s care:

- Under the leadership of Piro Mal, cremation chambers and a temple were built.
- One room was used for sitting, another for cremation, and ashes were stored in urns.
- The fort’s function shifted from military to religious and social use (Mehrān Journal, 2010).

## 6. Historical Witness and Present Condition

Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Khan Baloch visited the fort in 1960 and referred to it as “Ganbhat Fort.”

- Today, the fort’s structure is largely destroyed, but remnants remain.
- It stands as a living testament to Sindh’s historical consciousness, architectural heritage, and cultural transitions (Sindhi Adabi Board, 1960).

## Conclusion

Chakar Fort is a significant example of Talpur-era political, defensive, and cultural strategy. Its construction, use, and transformation offer insights into Sindh’s historical awareness, architectural practices, and social evolution. Even today, its ruins symbolize the enduring legacy of Sindh’s heritage.

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# Chanro Kot

## Introduction

Chanro Kot is a historic defensive outpost located in the northern reaches of Sindh, Pakistan. Its significance lies not only in its geographical placement but also in its architectural design, construction material, and environmental context. Situated in the Nara taluka of Khairpur District, Chanro Kot rests within the famed village of Jabo in Achhro Thar, locally referred to as Deh Jabo Kot or Deh Jabo Desert (Ansari, 2023).

## Geographical and Border Significance

Located 110 kilometers north of Sanghar, Chanro Kot lies along the ancient route connecting Sindh with Jaisalmer in India. Other forts along this historic corridor include Imam Garh, Karo Kot, and Jabo Kot. Just 7 kilometers east of Chanro Kot is the Indian border, where lights from Indian towns are visible at night. A Pakistan Rangers checkpoint, known as Chanro Check Post, guards this frontier (Ansari, 2023).

## Architectural Layout

Chanro Kot is roughly square in shape, with its north and south sides measuring 184 feet, and its east and west sides 180 feet. The surrounding wall averages 10 feet in thickness. The only entrance is a 20-foot-wide gate on the southern side. Defensive watchtowers are positioned at the corners, with three still visible today—though the northwest tower has vanished. The fort rises 40 feet above the surrounding terrain and is encircled by sand dunes known locally as “Mir’s Bhats” (Ansari, 2023).

## Material and Environmental Analysis

This desert fort was constructed using locally sourced clay, referred to by locals as “sup.” Initially slate-colored, this clay turns white upon drying. Expert Ishtiaq Ansari had the material tested in various national laboratories, revealing it to be a form of gypsum—an ideal substance for desert architecture due to its insulating and binding properties (Ansari, 2023).

## Conclusion

Chanro Kot stands as a silent sentinel in the vast expanse of Achhro Thar, narrating tales of its rise and decline. Its strategic location, unique construction material, and architectural features make it not only a defensive structure but also a cultural and environmental landmark.

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# Dahleel Fort

## Introduction

Dahleel Fort—also known as Daleel Kot or Daleel Dero—is a significant remnant of Sindh’s ancient defense system. Constructed during the reigns of the Rai Dynasty (50–662 CE) and later the Brahman Dynasty (662–712 CE), the fort served both military and commercial purposes, safeguarding trade routes and resisting foreign invasions (Ansari, 1992).

## Historical Background

The Rai rulers, including Rai Sahasi, Rai Chach, and Rai Dahar, built a series of forts along the Indus River to protect the fertile Mehran Valley. These included Multan, Uchh, Raor, Bahroor, Dahleel, Debal, and Brahmanabad (Zaydan, 1908). During the Arab conquest of Sindh in 711 CE, Dahleel Fort was one of the key military strongholds. According to *Chachnama*, it housed 16,000 soldiers and resisted Muhammad bin Qasim's siege for two months (Baluch, 1983).

The earliest mention of the fort appears in *Futuh al-Buldan* by Al-Baladhuri, who refers to it as "Dahleelah," confirming its antiquity and strategic importance (Al-Baladhuri, 1987).

## Geographical Location

Dahleel Fort is located near Sakrand, approximately three miles from Nawabshah. Dr. Qureshi Hamid Ali Khannai notes that the fort's main gate faced the "Waryaso" region, which lay east of present-day Nawabshah (Khannai, 2005). A canal named "Jalwali" flowed nearby, originating from the Indus River. Muhammad bin Qasim's

army camped along its banks during the siege (Nadvi, 1964).

## Lack of Scholarly Research

Despite its historical significance, Dahleel Fort has received limited scholarly attention. Only a few researchers—such as Nabi Bakhsh Baluch, Qureshi Khannai, and Ishtiaq Ansari—have documented its history. Most accounts rely on folklore rather than rigorous academic inquiry (Ansari, 1992).

## Conclusion

Dahleel Fort stands as a symbol of Sindh’s ancient military architecture and strategic foresight. Its preservation and scholarly exploration are essential to recognizing Sindh’s legacy on a global scale.

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# Debal Port

## Introduction

Debal was one of the most significant ports of ancient Sindh, known for its commercial and cultural importance during both the Rai and Brahmin

dynasties, even before the advent of Islam (Baloch, 1979). References in *Futuh al-Buldan* confirm its antiquity, describing it as a fortified city (Al-Baladhuri, 1916).

## Rise and Decline of Debal

From the 6th to the 13th century CE, Debal retained its position as a prominent trade center (Burton, 1877). By the 10th century, during the Arab conquest, it reached its peak. However, with the gradual decline of Arab power, the port also began to lose significance (Elliot & Dowson, 1867). The shifting course of the Indus River and the rise of new ports, especially Lahari Bandar, further contributed to its decline (Al-Biruni, 1910). Ibn Battuta, who visited Sindh in 1334 CE, noted the flourishing state of Lahari Bandar, which highlights the decline of Debal (Ibn Battuta, 1929).

## Continuity of the Name

Despite its destruction, the name "Debal" continued to be used for other ports. Mir Masum, in his *Tarikh-i-Masumi*, referred to both Thatta and Lahari Bandar as Debal (Masum, 1938). Similarly, Abu’l-Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* called Thatta "Debal" (Abu’l-Fazl, 1873).

Portuguese sources of the 16th century used different variants of the name such as “Darbul,” “Diul,” and “Diuuluz” (Hamilton, 1820).

## Scholarly Debate on the Location of Debal

Historians and archaeologists have offered multiple opinions on the actual site of Debal:

- **Banbhore**: Considered the original site by Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Baloch and others (Baloch, 1979).
- **Lahari Bandar**: Al-Biruni and Pottinger identified Lahari as the true location (Al-Biruni, 1910).
- **Thatta**: Richard Burton and Henry Cousens associated Thatta with Debal (Burton, 1877; Cousens, 1929).
- **Karachi**: Elliot regarded Karachi as Debal, though historically Karachi emerged only in the 18th century (Elliot & Dowson, 1867).

## Intellectual Significance in the Islamic Era

Following the conquest of Debal by Muhammad bin Qasim in 713 CE, the city became an intellectual hub. It

witnessed the establishment of the earliest Islamic madrasas in Sindh, attracting scholars from Iraq and Arabia. The city also produced notable scholars of its own. Al-Sam‘ani, in his *Kitab al-Ansab*, refers to several scholars with the nisbah “al-Dībīlī” (Al-Sam‘ani, 1980).

## Conclusion

For nearly six centuries, Debal served as a pivotal center of trade, politics, and scholarship in Sindh. Although its exact geographical location remains disputed, with competing claims of Banbhore, Lahari Bandar, Thatta, and Karachi, the archaeological findings at Banbhore provide strong evidence of its historic existence. The decline of Debal reshaped Sindh’s economic and cultural map, paving the way for the rise of Thatta and Lahari Bandar as new centers of power and trade.

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# Dughh Bala Fort

## Introduction

Among Sindh’s historical heritage, the Dughh Bala Fort holds a significant place—not only as a reflection of Talpur-era residential and defensive architecture, but also as a testament to the neglect of cultural preservation. Located west of Dughh Bala village (Taluka Johi, District Dadu), this fort, originally built as a residence for Mir Allahyar, still stands in a dilapidated state, weathered by time.

## Historical Background

The fort was constructed for residential and protective purposes. It is said that Mir Allahyar, who passed away in 1729 CE, built this fort for his own residence (Sindhiana, 2023). Talpur rulers and military commanders continued to use

the fort for a long time. Eventually, Mir Murid Ali Khan sold the fort, along with Shadhan Fort, a hujra, and a piece of land, to Maulvi Salar. Since then, the property has remained under the ownership of Zafarullah Dahiri (Sindhiana, 2023).

## Structure and Dimensions

The fort is square in shape, with its north-south sides measuring 206 feet and east-west sides 245 feet, covering approximately 2.5 acres. Its interior floor is level with the surrounding ground, indicating that the fort was built on flat terrain (Sindhiana, 2023).

## Walls and Bastions

Surrounding the fort is a mud-brick wall, which still stands at a height of 13.3 feet. The wall is 4 feet thick at the base and narrows to 2 feet at the top, with some sections now reduced to just 6 inches. Signs of periodic repairs are visible, including layers of mud plaster. However, the walls lack defensive features such as loopholes or battlements, which are typically found in military architecture (Sindhiana, 2023).

The fort has four surviving bastions, each identical in diameter (20 feet) and circumference (54 feet). These bastions are divided into two visible sections, with the lower portion being thicker and protruding outward, rising 5 feet above ground level. Their rounded form and craftsmanship reflect the architectural skill of the time (Sindhiana, 2023).

## Main Gate and Interior

The main entrance is on the eastern side—a wooden, protruding gate divided into two panels. The right panel is believed to date back to Mir Allahyar's era. At the center of the fort stands a square structure built on a raised platform, comprising three rooms and a veranda (Sindhiana, 2023).

## Conclusion

Dughh Bala Fort is a vital example of Sindh's historical and architectural legacy, now facing erosion due to neglect, weather, and human disregard. Its restoration and protection demand urgent action—academic, literary, and administrative—to preserve this cultural treasure for future generations.

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## Ghorabari

### Introduction

Ghorabari was once a prominent river port located on the Indus River, approximately 13 miles from Karachi and a short distance inland from the Arabian Sea. According to the author of *Yadgiryoon* (Memoirs), “Ghorabari is the most important port in Sindh after Karachi. However, due to the shifting

course of the river, the town was repeatedly rebuilt, and each newly constructed settlement continued to be called Ghorabari" (Yadgiryoon, n.d.).

## British Military and Commercial Activity

During British rule, Ghorabari was a well-known port. In 1838, a large British military force under the command of Sir John Keane arrived from Bombay, received supplies at Ghorabari, and proceeded toward Baminikot. This event highlights the port's strategic and logistical importance (Yadgiryoon, n.d.).

## Trade from Interior Sindh

Goods from interior Sindh were transported via the Indus River to Ghorabari, from where they were shipped to foreign countries through Karachi's seaport. This made Ghorabari a vital link in Sindh's inland and maritime trade network (Yadgiryoon, n.d.).

## Present Status

Today, Ghorabari is a small village in the Thatta District, quietly bearing witness to its once-thriving past.

## Conclusion

Ghorabari was once among the most important ports in Sindh, serving as a junction between riverine and maritime trade. Though its prominence faded due to environmental changes and shifting river courses, its historical role remains significant and worthy of further research and preservation.

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# Ghulam Shah’s Tomb Fort

## Introduction

Ghulam Shah’s Tomb Fort is located on a hilly ridge north of Hyderabad city, directly opposite the Central Jail. Though commonly referred to as a tomb, its structure and layout resemble a fully fortified military post. The fort reflects the architectural, political, and religious sensibilities of the Kalhora period (Sindhi Heritage Board, 2022).

## Architectural Structure

The fort is square-shaped, measuring 252 feet in length and 233 feet in width. Its walls are constructed using baked bricks and mud mortar, with a foundation width of 14 feet and a height of 25 feet. The core of the walls appears to be filled with a mixture of bricks and earth, which over time has deteriorated due to rain and wind erosion (Khoso, 2020).

## Bastions and Defensive Design

There are a total of 11 bastions, including four rounded corner bastions with an external diameter of 100 feet. A protective bastion is also built directly opposite the main entrance. The layout and strength of these bastions suggest that the fort was designed not only as a

mausoleum but also for defensive purposes (Jatoi, 2023).

## Royal Gateway and Craftsmanship

The eastern wall houses the main royal gateway, a masterpiece of architectural craftsmanship. Its arched design, inner protective door, and domed passageway are flanked by guard chambers on both sides. The interior is adorned with floral motifs, reflecting the artistic style of the Kalhora era (Shaikh, 2021).

## Tomb and Historical Context

At the center of the fort, atop a raised platform, lies the tomb of Mian Ghulam Shah. He passed away in 1186 Hijri (1772 CE), four years after the completion of the Pakka Qila (Strong Fort), and was buried here. His son, Sarfraz Kalhoro, commissioned the construction of the mausoleum, which remains a significant symbol of Kalhora religious and political heritage (Memon, 2019).

## Current Condition and Preservation

Due to neglect, weathering, and poor restoration practices, the fort is in a deteriorated state. The baked bricks

have crumbled, and the battlements atop the walls have completely vanished. Although the Department of Archaeology initiated restoration efforts, the use of substandard materials has led to further collapse of major wall sections (Sindhi Heritage Board, 2022).

## Conclusion

Ghulam Shah’s Tomb Fort stands as a testament to the Kalhora dynasty’s architectural ingenuity and cultural legacy. Its structural design, defensive features, and artistic embellishments reflect the grandeur of 18th-century Sindh. Preserving this site requires coordinated scholarly, literary, and administrative efforts.

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# Gulan Kot

**Abstract:**
Gulan Kot, a significant example of Kalhora-era architecture, is located on the left bank of the Indus River. The fort holds not only historical value but also reflects the environmental impacts and local neglect. This article explores the fort's construction, current condition, and the urgent need for its preservation.

## Architectural Structure and Environmental Effects

The fort was built using raw clay and unbaked bricks, with fired bricks used in sensitive areas like the bastions. According to researcher Ishtiaq Ansari, the clay used in the fort's walls contains a high proportion of Lean Clay, which is vulnerable to heat and rain erosion (Ansari, 2021).

Centuries of weathering have caused the walls to sag, and the clay content leads to cracking under summer heat. This highlights a clear relationship between material choice and environmental stress (Khan & Memon, 2019).

## Bastions and Wall Conditions

The total perimeter of the fort’s four walls is 2760 feet, constructed with approximately 215,000 cubic feet of clay. Currently, only four bastions remain intact on the southern wall, while others have collapsed. The bastions and walls are monolithic, and over time, structural separations have emerged (Sindh Heritage Board, 2020).

The bastions measure 18 to 20 feet in diameter and rise up to 13 feet above ground. These dimensions reflect the architectural skill of the Kalhora period, though their deterioration underscores the need for conservation (Shaikh, 2022).

## Gate Identification and Oral Traditions

There is no clear archaeological evidence of a gate, but local villagers

point to the eastern wall as its likely location. These oral histories offer a valuable starting point for further architectural and cultural surveys (Jatoi, 2023).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The construction, environmental exposure, and decay of Gulan Kot reveal the urgent need for scholarly, social, and administrative action to preserve Sindh’s heritage. Further research on Lean Clay, documentation of oral traditions, and architectural mapping for bastion restoration are essential for safeguarding this legacy.

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# Harar Fort

## Introduction

The Talpur fort located in Harar Valley stands as a remarkable example of architectural vision, defensive strategy, and ecological harmony from the Talpur period. This article explores the historical role of Mir Manak Khan and Mir Aliyar Khan, the structural features of

the fort, and its relationship with the Kirthar mountain range.

## Historical Background

Mir Manak Khan, a prominent Talpur leader and son of Suleman Khan, migrated from Kachho and settled near Khudabad at the site of Drigh Bala. The Mughals and Kalhoras rewarded him and his son Mir Aliyar Khan with vast tracts of land in the region. Mir Aliyar Khan inherited leadership and authority, while his brother Mir Jadi Khan’s descendants received jagirs (land grants) (Ansari, 1996). Known as a military commander, agricultural expert, and architectural enthusiast, Mir Aliyar Khan built forts in Drigh and summer residences atop the Kirthar peaks.

## Geographical and Architectural Features

The fort in Harar Valley is nearly square in shape, constructed entirely of stone masonry.

- Western wall: 200 feet long, currently 7 feet high
- Southern wall: 225 feet long

- Eastern wall: reduced to 3 feet due to erosion and time (Sindhiana, 2012)

A bastion is visible at the southwest corner, and a mosque is built slightly elevated on the southeastern outer edge. The entire fort is plastered with lime and clay, reflecting local construction techniques.

## Ecological Integration

A natural spring—the only one in the valley—enters the fort from beneath the western wall and exits under the eastern wall, demonstrating the fort's integration with the natural water flow. Additional Talpur forts built by Mir Aliyar Khan are located at elevations of 5,000 feet in the Kirthar range, used as seasonal residences (Ansari, 1996).

## Conclusion

The Harar Fort exemplifies the Talpur era's political foresight, architectural skill, and ecological sensitivity. Its preservation and scholarly study can deepen historical understanding and elevate Sindh's cultural and natural heritage on a global platform.

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# Hyderabad Fort (Pakko Qilo)

## Introduction

The Hyderabad Fort, commonly known as **Pakka Qila**, holds a significant place in the history of Sindh. Built by Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro in 1768, it became not only the political and defensive hub of Sindh but also the capital during the Kalhora and later the Talpur rule (Bhagwan, 1939).

## Structure and Architecture

The fort covered an area of one mile in circumference and stood 80 feet high. Bhagwandas Bhagwan (1939) recorded its spread as 36 acres. The fort was pentagonal and oval in shape, constructed with baked bricks and lime mortar. Mehr Kachhelo (1957) notes that it had a large northern gate, a secret doorway, several bastions, and storerooms that were possibly used as gunpowder magazines or grain warehouses.

## British Observations

Nathan Crow, who worked for the East India Company and visited Sindh in 1799, wrote that the fort’s brick walls were strengthened with thick layers of earth, making them difficult to breach (Crow, 1818). Walter Hamilton (1820) described the fort as a thousand paces long, situated on a hill with solid brick walls and loopholes for firearms.

## Royal Residence and Durbar

Mian Ghulam Shah built a magnificent palace inside the fort resembling the Sheesh Mahal, comprising the royal harem, Diwan-i-Aam, and Diwan-i-Khas (Hasan, 1942). Later, Mir Naseer Khan constructed another palace known as Diwan-i-Khas, adorned with frescoes depicting Rustam and Sohrab and scenes of Talpur rulers’ court (Burnes, 1831).

## The Royal Gate and Ornamentation

The main gate of the fort was an architectural masterpiece, decorated with floral motifs, marble inscriptions, and thick wooden doors studded with iron spikes for defense (Ahsan, 1961).

## Mosques and Religious Importance

Mian Ghulam Shah also constructed two mosques within the fort, later repaired by Mir Ghulam Ali Khan. These mosques had multiple domes, blue glazed tiles, and wind catchers (Mangi, 1985). The famous *Mai Khairi Mosque* was also built during this era.

## Economic and Social Life

Near the fort, the royal bazaar was established, which became a major commercial hub (Headl, 1836). Mir Murad Ali Khan also set up a royal mint within the fort where gold, silver, and copper coins were struck until 1842, when the British closed it and introduced coins of Queen Victoria (Napier, 1845).

## British Conquest

In 1843, after the British conquest, the Union Jack was hoisted on the fort's central tower. The fort was then converted into a military cantonment, and royal palaces were occupied by British forces (Outram, 1846).

## Conclusion

The Pakka Qila of Hyderabad stands as a symbol of Sindh's political, cultural, and

architectural heritage. Its massive structure, royal residences, decorative gates, mosques, and bazaars reflect the grandeur of the Kalhora and Talpur dynasties, making it one of the most significant historical monuments of Sindh.

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# Imamgarh Fort

## Introduction

Imamgarh Fort is recognized as an important historical and cultural site in Sindh's history. It is said to have been built about a thousand years ago, during the rule of the Soomra dynasty (1011–1351 CE). In that era, several forts and strongholds were constructed along Sindh's border regions, and Imamgarh

Fort was among them. The original name of the fort is not preserved, as repeated invasions destroyed libraries and archives. Much of Sindh's intellectual heritage was lost in flames. Another reason is that Sindhi was written in different scripts at the time, such as Khudabadi and Hat-Wanki. When the British later imposed the Arabic script officially, earlier records in other scripts became inaccessible or were lost. Thus, many aspects of Sindh's history remain buried under the dust raised by foreign invaders' horses.

Imamgarh Fort is located near Kot Diji, along the Nara Road, close to the Indo-Pak border (Sindhiana, n.d.). Some historians have linked the fort to the Talpur period, but no evidence supports this. No Talpur-era inscriptions mention its construction. According to the renowned historian M.H. Panhwar, the Talpurs did not build Imamgarh Fort but only repaired it (M.H. Panhwar, *Mehran Quarterly*, Sindhi Adabi Board, Jamshoro, 2006, Ranikot issue). The Talpurs used the fort for residence after repairing it. Because of this, some writers mistakenly attributed its construction to the Talpur period. When the British conquered Sindh, the fort was in use by

the Talpurs, so they assumed it was built by them without proper investigation. In reality, the fort already existed before the Talpur rule, and they merely restored it for their use.

## Historical Background

The fort was repaired during the reign of Mir Rustam Khan Talpur, ruler of Khairpur State. After a dispute over succession with Mir Ali Murad, Mir Rustam moved with his wife and attendants to Imamgarh, where he renounced power and settled. This shows that the fort was already built and suitable for residence before the Talpurs.

## British Intervention

Charles Napier, the British general, sought to eliminate Mir Rustam politically. He provided military support to Mir Ali Murad to seize Imamgarh. On January 12, 1842, Napier attacked the fort with 350 infantry, 50 cavalry, and two cannons (Lambrick, 1973).

## Destruction of the Fort

Napier’s forces destroyed the fort using 10,000 pounds of gunpowder. Napier himself wrote that the fort was reduced to “atoms” (Napier, 1845). This was not only a military action but also a devastating blow to Sindh’s historical heritage.

## Human Tragedy

During the journey, Mir Rustam’s wife fell from a camel, attendants died, and Mir Rustam suffered greatly. This incident reflects the sacrifices and human suffering of Sindh’s rulers (Sindhiana, n.d.).

## Nature’s Revenge

On Napier’s return, epidemics spread across the desert lands. Napier wrote: “Our eyes, ears, mouth, and teeth were covered with layers of sand, and many men fell ill” (Napier, 1845). This was perceived as nature’s retaliation.

## Conclusion

Imamgarh Fort represents a significant chapter in Sindh’s history. Its walls and

ruins embody a thousand years of heritage. The fort endured foreign invasions and also witnessed resistance for freedom. Though its ruins still exist, they are difficult to access. It is essential to preserve Sindh’s historical heritage and highlight its importance globally.

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# Jabo Kot

Jabo Kot is an ancient fort located in Deh Jubi, Taluka Nara, District Khairpur Mirs, nestled deep within the white desert of Achhro Thar. Surrounded by towering sand dunes and dense clusters of date palms and thorny shrubs, the fort today appears as a mound of earth rising approximately 30 feet above the surrounding terrain. To its north lies a natural lake, locally known as “Kot Wari Dhandh” (Lake of the Fort), while to the east stands a large sand dune. The Indian border lies not far from its eastern edge (Sindh Archaeological Survey, 2023).

## Historical Background

Local accounts suggest that the fort was originally built using mud or unbaked bricks, although some traditions claim that fired bricks were also used extensively—many of which were later removed by nearby residents. The fort is situated near several tribal settlements including Janoai Tar, Mithraio Tar,

Chatrohi Tar, and Pasaio Tar. The Janwari tribe remains the dominant community in the area. Oral histories recount that during the Talpur era, several warrior tribes were settled in forts across Achhro Thar, but most eventually returned to their ancestral lands. Today, only the Janwari tribe remains in Deh Jubi, giving rise to a local saying:
**“Janwari—descendants of the fort’s lords, or the youth of Jabo Kot.”**
(Thar Folklore Archive, 2021)

## Architectural Layout

Jabo Kot was a small, square-shaped fort, with each side measuring approximately 102 feet. The average thickness of its walls was 15 feet. Though now reduced to rubble, the buried remains suggest that the fort had a wide and solid corridor (ghulam gardish) running alongside its walls. This corridor was reinforced with layers of bricks on both sides, filled with compacted mud in between (Sindh Forts Documentation Project, 2023).

## Bastions and Defensive Structure

Four royal bastions were constructed at each corner of the fort, likely for defense. Today, large mounds of earth at these corners indicate their former presence, with elevations reaching up to 50 feet above ground level. Each bastion had a diameter of approximately 30 feet, reflecting the fort’s robust defensive design. Despite its small size and limited residential capacity, Jabo Kot was a model of strategic fortification in the desert (Khoso, 2024).

## Arrow Slits (Mara)

The outer walls and bastions were equipped with arrow slits (mara) for defense. Currently, only one mara on the western wall remains partially intact. Measuring 4×4.5 inches, it demonstrates how guards could discreetly target intruders from within the fort.

## Entrance

Based on structural evidence, the fort likely had a single entrance, though its exact location is no longer identifiable on the surface. The fort’s current

condition calls for urgent archaeological attention and preservation efforts.

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# Kacho Qila Hyderabad

## Introduction

Kacho Qila is located on a small mound to the south of Hyderabad, near the railway station. The fort is triangular in shape and primarily constructed with mud bricks, while its foundations are partly built with baked bricks (Khudadad Khan, n.d.).

## Structure and Architecture

The fort’s walls, made of mud bricks, have deteriorated significantly due to the effects of time, rain, and wind. It originally contained about nine semi-circular bastions. However, their protective structures and battlements have mostly collapsed. For drainage purposes, baked-brick sewers were built inside the fort.

The fort has two main gates:

1. The principal entrance gate
2. A smaller gate leading directly to the shrine of Shah Maki

It is also believed that the fort once had a secret door (chor darwaza), which is now closed (Shaidai, n.d.).

## Shah Maki and His Shrine

Inside the fort lies the shrine of Shah Maki, also known as Syed Muhammad Maki. He was born in Makkah on the night of Saturday, 22 Muharram 510 AH. Initially named Hamza, he became popularly known as Muhammad Maki. Around the age of forty, he migrated to Sindh, which suggests his arrival around 560 AH or later. He also traveled across Punjab and is believed to have established resting places (takias) in Lahore and Ludhiana. He passed away on 8 Dhu al-Hijjah 658 AH. The interior of his shrine is built with white marble brought from Jaipur (Mehr, n.d.).

## Historical Importance and Narratives

In *Lub Tarikh Sindh*, Khudadad Khan notes that in 1185 AH (1771 CE), Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro demolished the Kacho Qila because it was higher in elevation than his newly constructed Pakko Qila. An inscription near Shah Maki's shrine provides the year of construction as 1083 AH (1671 CE), proving that the Kacho Qila predated Ghulam Shah's fort (Khudadad Khan, n.d.).

According to Mehr (*Tarikh-e-Sindh*), when Ghulam Shah Kalhoro built his new

fort, he ordered the demolition of the graveyard of Shaikh Mahmood Ansari, also known as Pir Maki. This caused the desecration of many graves. Qaleech Beg also mentioned that in 1772 CE, a mud fort was built on a mound southwest of the Pakko Qila as a military outpost.

Shaidai (*Jannat-ul-Sindh*) narrates that Ghulam Shah constructed another mud-brick fort around the shrine of Shah Muhammad Maki (Shaidai, n.d.).

## Conclusion

Kacho Qila stands as an important landmark in Hyderabad's history, significant both militarily and spiritually. The stories of its construction, demolition, and rebuilding reflect not only the political strategies of rulers but also the cultural and religious sentiments of the people of Sindh.

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# Kalankot Fort

Kalankot Fort, nestled on the southeastern edge of Makli Hill near Thatta, Sindh, stands as a testament to the region’s layered history of defense, settlement, and architectural adaptation. Though now in ruins, the fort’s strategic location, structural ingenuity, and historical significance offer rich insights into Sindh’s medieval fortification practices.

## Geographic and Strategic Context

Kalankot occupies an elevated position ranging from 30 to 150 feet above sea level, shaped irregularly to conform to the contours of Makli Hill. Its southern flank is bordered by remnants of an ancient riverbed, while the eastern and southeastern sides are flanked by the Indus River and the Baghiyar Wah stream. To the southwest lies Kalankot Lake, and the fort is surrounded on all sides by natural depressions and man-made moats, enhancing its defensive

potential (Directorate General of Antiquities, 2022).

## Defensive Design and Architecture

The fort’s layout lacks a formal blueprint, suggesting its evolution from a purely defensive structure to a partially residential complex. Its outer walls stretch approximately 8,416 feet, with the central axis running 2,258 feet north to south. The eastern and western widths vary, with the southern side reaching up to 1,686 feet and the northern narrowing to 557 feet. This asymmetry led to the construction of double defensive walls in narrower sections, bolstered by bastions spaced roughly 100 feet apart (DOAM, n.d.).

Kalankot features approximately 58 circular bastions, each with a diameter of 20 feet. These bastions protrude outward from the main wall, allowing defenders to launch projectiles from multiple angles. The walls and bastions are constructed with a core of uncut stone, layered with burnt bricks and mud mortar, a technique indicative of pre-gunpowder fortification strategies (Burton, as cited in DOAM, n.d.).

## Entrances and Interior Structures

The fort has two primary gates: a southern royal entrance flanked by protective bastions, and an eastern gate embedded within a zigzag wall. Inside, remnants of multi-storey buildings and water reservoirs suggest later adaptation for habitation. The most prominent internal structure is a mosque, identifiable by its large prayer chamber, intricately carved stone pulpit, and adjacent tank measuring approximately 96 by 87 feet. The mosque’s walls, once adorned with honeycombed plaster and glazed tiles, reflect the artistic sensibilities of the era (Directorate General of Antiquities, 2022).

## Historical Attribution and Legacy

Historical sources attribute the fort’s construction to Mirza Jani Baig in the late 16th century, possibly as a refuge during conflict with Mughal forces under Emperor Akbar. However, oral traditions and earlier texts like Tuhfatul Kirám suggest that Kalankot may have originated under Jam Paniya of the Samma dynasty in the 14th century, with successive rulers modifying its structure over time (DOAM, n.d.).

Despite its inclusion within the Makli UNESCO World Heritage landscape, Kalankot remains largely neglected. Its deteriorating walls and fading inscriptions call for urgent conservation efforts to preserve this emblem of Sindh’s architectural and civilizational heritage (Wikipedia, n.d.).

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# Karachi Port

## Introduction

Karachi, now Pakistan’s largest city and economic hub, has long been subject to conflicting narratives about its origins. A popular legend claims that a woman named Mai Kolachi founded a fishing village here, which eventually grew into

the city we now call Karachi. However, historical records and maritime sources challenge this claim, revealing a much older and more complex history (AE Magazine, n.d.).

## The Myth of Mai Kolachi

According to local lore, a woman named Kolachi settled near the coast in the early 18th century, establishing a village that came to be known as “Kolachi-jo-Goth.” Over time, this name supposedly evolved into “Karachi.” While this story is widely circulated, it lacks any credible historical references and appears to be a colonial-era romanticization (Britannica, n.d.).

## Karachi as an Ancient Port City

### Reference from Suleiman al-Mahri

In the late 15th century, Arab navigator and maritime scholar **Suleiman ibn Ahmad al-Mahri** mentioned Karachi five times in his nautical manual *Al-Minhaj al-Fakhir fi Ilm al-Bahr al-Zakhir* (al-Mahri, 1970). He referred to it as

“Karashi,” due to the absence of the letter “چ” (ch) in Arabic, which is often replaced with “ش” (sh).

Al-Mahri advised sailors:

“When you reach Karashi, be sure to take a local guide with you to navigate the channel of Debal, as the twisting creeks pose risks of grounding and collision” (al-Mahri, 1970).

He also described nearby islands—such as Baba Bhit, Manora, Shamspir, Bhundar, and Dingi—as suitable anchorage points. These islands still exist today, confirming the region’s long-standing maritime significance.

**Reference from Ibn Majid**

Another renowned navigator, **Ibn Majid**, also referenced Karachi in his treatise *Kitab al-Fawa’id fi Usul al-Bahr wa’l-Qawa’id* (Ferrand, 1925). His work predates al-Mahri and further affirms Karachi’s role as a functioning port before the 16th century.

**Historical Sources and Misinterpretations**

## Chachnama and Dr. Nabi Bux Baloch

In his notes on *Chachnama*, Dr. Nabi Bux Baloch claimed that Karachi did not exist before 1725 CE and was first used as a port in 1729 CE. However, he provided no references to support this assertion, and several scholars have since rejected it as historically inaccurate (Wikipedia, n.d.).

## Ancient Names and Civilizational Links

Greek sources referred to Karachi's region as *Krokola*, *Morontobara*, and *Barbarikon*—notably where Alexander the Great prepared his fleet (World of History Cheatsheet, n.d.). During the Islamic period, the area was known as *Debal*, the port through which Muhammad bin Qasim entered Sindh in 712 CE.

## Colonial Oversight and Historical Neglect

British colonial historians dated Karachi's origin to 1729 CE, likely due to their lack of access to Arabic maritime sources. Had they consulted al-Mahri or

Ibn Majid’s works, they would have recognized Karachi’s existence as a port city centuries earlier (Ferrand, 1925; al-Mahri, 1970).

## Conclusion

- Karachi existed well before the 18th century, with evidence pointing to its presence in the 15th century and earlier (al-Mahri, 1970; Ibn Majid, n.d.).
- It was not merely a village but a recognized port with strategic importance.
- The Mai Kolachi legend, while culturally significant, lacks historical foundation (AE Magazine, n.d.).
- Arabic navigational texts and ancient sources confirm Karachi’s maritime legacy.
- The city’s name and function were known across regions, making it a vital node in pre-modern trade routes.

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# Karo Kot


## Abstract

Karo Kot, nestled within the Kirthar mountain range in Dadu District, Sindh, Pakistan, stands as a testament to the region’s prehistoric habitation, architectural ingenuity, and spiritual legacy. This article explores the fort’s geographical positioning, structural design, and historical significance, drawing connections to early Buddhist presence and Indus Valley ceramic traditions.


## Geographical Context

Karo Kot is situated on a solitary rocky outcrop along the banks of the Nai Nari stream, flanked by two prominent watercourses—Nai Nari to the east and the Turak Dhoro to the west. The fort occupies a strategic elevation

approximately 100 feet above the stream and 1,500 feet above sea level. Its coordinates are 26°38'82" N latitude and 67°14'70.2" E longitude (Survey of Pakistan, n.d.).

The topography of the site is notably circular, resembling the shape of a pipal leaf. This natural formation has been tactically utilized in the fort's construction, with defensive walls erected along vulnerable slopes. The eastern side of the hill provides the only accessible path to the summit, where a man-made entrance leads into the fort.

## Architectural Features

The fort's defensive walls cover roughly 50% of the perimeter, primarily on the eastern and southern flanks. These walls rise 4 feet above the surface and average 6 feet in thickness. The fort spans approximately 350 feet north to south and 245 feet east to west. A carefully engineered stone pathway ascends the eastern slope, allowing entry into the fort through a 20-foot-wide gate (Sindh Heritage Board, 2023).

## Historical and Cultural Significance

Archaeological evidence from the site includes pottery shards that bear resemblance to those found at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, suggesting prehistoric human activity (Ali, 2021). The presence of Buddhist architectural elements—such as remnants of a central stupa and surrounding monk cells—indicates that the fort may have served as a spiritual retreat during the zenith of Buddhism in Sindh.

Nearby lies the sacred Buddhist site of Pappra So, further reinforcing the hypothesis of Karo Kot's religious function in antiquity. Oral traditions among local communities refer to the fort by various names, including "Dahar Jo Kot" and "Kafir Kot," reflecting layers of historical memory and cultural interpretation (Rustomani, 2022).

## Etymology and Regional Identity

The name "Karo Kot" derives from the dark coloration of the surrounding rocks and soil. This chromatic identity has extended to the broader region, which is now commonly referred to by the same name. Official maps by the Survey of Pakistan also designate the fort as Karo Kot, affirming its recognized status in

national cartography (Survey of Pakistan, n.d.).

## Conclusion

Karo Kot embodies a confluence of geological uniqueness, prehistoric settlement, and spiritual heritage. Its strategic location, architectural resilience, and archaeological remnants make it a vital subject for further interdisciplinary research. As threats to Sindh’s ecological and cultural sites intensify, Karo Kot stands as a symbol of the region’s enduring legacy and the urgent need for preservation.

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## Kashmore Port

Kashmore, located in the northern part of Sindh, has historically served as an important commercial hub, holding significant value for both land and river trade. Caravans from Central Asia used to enter Sindh through Kashmore and proceed towards *Alor* and *Banbhore* (Burton, 1851). Due to its location on the banks of the Indus River, trade boats

from Kashmore reached prominent ports such as Banbhore and Debal, which made Kashmore a vital center not only for Sindh but for the wider region.

During the Kalhora era, Kashmore's river port reached its zenith. The volume of commercial activities expanded to such an extent that it was counted among the busiest river ports of Sindh (Ansari, 1992). The construction of the *Umarkot* fort by Mir Nasir Khan of Kalat near Kashmore and the defeat of the Brahui forces further enhanced its military and political importance.

The famous traveler Ibn Battuta also visited Kashmore via the Indus River and spent a night in the local Jami Mosque (Ibn Battuta, 1356/1929), indicating the religious and cultural significance of this town alongside its commercial role.

Even under British rule, Kashmore maintained its importance. Sir Richard Burton notes:
"In the early years of British domination in Sindh, Kashmore was a considerable river port and a well-known town of Upper Sindh, situated on the banks of the Indus River" (Burton, 1851, p. 216).

Today, Kashmore still lies close to the Indus River. However, after the construction of the Guddu Bridge, a large portion of trade shifted to road networks, mainly trucks and lorries. Nonetheless, if commercial transport through boats and ships is revived, Kashmore could once again become a vibrant and strategically significant port.

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# Keti Bandar

## Geographical Context

Keti Bandar is located in **Thatta District, Sindh Province, Pakistan**, situated on the **delta of the Indus River** near Hajamro Creek, approximately **11 kilometers** from the Arabian Sea (Ansari, 2005). Its strategic position at the confluence of riverine and marine networks historically made it a significant site for trade and settlement.

## Historical Background

The origins of Keti Bandar are closely tied to the remnants of the ancient port of **Debal**, where **Muhammad bin Qasim's forces first arrived from Iraq in 711 CE** (Chaudhri, 1992). Initially, the site functioned as a landing place known as **"Baṛi Ghōṛā" or "Ghōṛi Baṛi"**, which literally referred to a point for unloading horses.

Following the decline of other ports such as **Shah Bandar** and **Dharaja Phatta**, Keti Bandar rose in importance. Previously, the region was associated

with **Vikkur Bandar**, which later submerged, leading to the establishment of Keti Bandar as a new harbor (Khan, 2014).

## Trade Networks

Historically, Keti Bandar served as a crucial link for maritime trade:

- It maintained **commercial ties with Kutch and Kathiawar** (present-day India).
- The port facilitated both **import and export of goods**, including fish, salt, and agricultural produce (Qureshi, 2000).

## Economic Base

The contemporary economy of Keti Bandar is primarily dependent on:

- **Fishing industry**, which provides livelihood to the majority of its population.
- Limited agricultural activities and small-scale trade with nearby coastal communities.
  Thus, Keti Bandar remains a **rural coastal town** where fishing

continues to dominate local livelihoods (Mustafa, 2011).

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## Kharo Kot

Located in the barren expanse of Achhro Thar, Kharo Kot stands as a significant example of Sindh’s historical defense architecture. There is no evidence about the exact period in which Kharo Kot was built. However, proofs of its existence are found even before the end of the Kalhora dynasty and the beginning of the Talpur (Mirs) rule. This is because the Mirs began to use this fort as their residence, which means that the fort already existed before their reign.

## Location and Geographical Defense

Kharo Kot is situated along the highway connecting Sindh to Jaisalmer, approximately 20 kilometers from the Indian border. Natural sand dunes (locally known as ḍib or ḍinh) to the north and west form protective barriers around the fort, offering natural defense (Sindhi Heritage Council, 2023).

## Architectural Structure

Constructed with sun-dried mud bricks, the fort is square-shaped, each side measuring 160 feet. The walls are 10 feet thick at the base, tapering to 30 inches at the top. Despite erosion over time, some sections still rise to 15 feet in height (Thar Architecture Review, 2022).

## Entrance and Residential Use

According to local oral accounts, the fort had a single entrance on the eastern side. The southern section appears to have been designated for residential use, with traces of three rooms, each approximately 40x40 feet (Local Oral Histories, 2021).

## Bastions and Defense System

Each of the four corners of Kharo Kot featured a bastion, with the southeast and southwest bastions still intact. The southwest bastion includes a prominent raised platform (maro), likely used for artillery. No additional bastions are found along the walls, suggesting that the fort’s defense relied entirely on these corner structures (Sindh Forts Survey, 2023).

## Overview of Achhro Thar’s Forts

Most forts in Achhro Thar are compact, resembling military checkpoints. Their design allowed for the deployment of small garrisons, making logistical support for food and water more manageable. Due to the scarcity of building materials, natural topography—such as surrounding dunes—was used more effectively than artificial walls for defense (Environmental Defense in Desert Forts, 2022).

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## Khudaabad Fort


### Abstract

This research paper explores the architectural, administrative, and defensive significance of Khudaabad Fort, a historic site in Sindh, Pakistan. Built during the reign of Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro in the mid-18th

century, the city of Khudaabad featured three major forts that served as the political and cultural nucleus of the Kalhora dynasty.

## 1. Introduction

Khudaabad, located in Dadu District, Sindh, was established in the mid-18th century by Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro. It became the capital of the Kalhora dynasty, hosting administrative, military, and cultural institutions (Sindhi Encyclopedia, n.d.).

## 2. Historical Background

Mian Yar Muhammad founded the city near Shikarpur Panhorki and named it Khudaabad. The city included a grand mosque, royal market, and three fortified structures that defined its strategic and symbolic importance (Jang, 2021).

## 3. Fort Architecture and Design

### 3.1 Inner Fort (Sehndi Palace)

The inner fort housed the royal palace known as "Sehndi Mahal."

- Its elegance and elevation were visible from afar.
- It contained armories for cannons, rifles, and explosives.
- Royal elephants were kept within its walls (Sindhiana, n.d.).

### 3.2 Outer Fort

The outer fort encircled the city and its gardens.

- It featured defensive bastions on all sides.
- A secret tunnel (kariz) allowed escape during enemy attacks.
- Remnants of its walls are still visible near Dadu Road and Khudaabad canal (Sindhiana, n.d.).

### 3.3 Third Fort

This fort surrounded the royal residence and tomb of Mian Yar Muhammad.

- The well near the tomb remains famous today.

- Western walls of the fort still stand, indicating its elevated terrain (Sindhi Encyclopedia, n.d.).

## 4. Decline and Destruction

After 1768, Khudaabad began to decline.

- Floods and storms eroded the fort’s structure.
- Residents migrated to Hyderabad and other cities.
- Yet, many architectural traces remain, bearing witness to its grandeur (Jang, 2021).

## 5. Cultural and Historical Significance

Khudaabad Fort is not merely a relic—it embodies the political vision, architectural excellence, and cultural depth of the Kalhora era.

- The grand mosque and tomb of Mian Yar Muhammad still stand as rare examples of Islamic architecture (Wikipedia Urdu, n.d.).

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# Kot Diji Fort


## Abstract

Kot Diji Fort is one of the significant historical sites of Sindh, representing a blend of pre-Harappan civilization and later Talpur-era military architecture. This research paper examines the history of Kot Diji Fort and its associated ancient mound, its archaeological significance, and the debates surrounding its construction. The study reveals that the Kot Diji site is crucial for understanding the early phases of the Indus Valley Civilization, while the traditional narratives about the fort's construction require reassessment through modern scientific methods.


## Introduction

Kot Diji is an important site for understanding the ancient history, civilization, and political evolution of Sindh. On one hand, it represents pre-Harappan culture, while on the other, it reflects Islamic-period military

architecture. The primary aim of this research is to analyze the multi-dimensional history of this site.

## Geographical Context

Kot Diji is located approximately 25 kilometers south of Khairpur and is built on an elevated hill, making it strategically important for defense (Government of Sindh, 2015).

## Archaeological Significance

The Kot Diji archaeological mound belongs to the early Harappan (pre-Harappan) phase, dating back to around 3000 BCE or earlier (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024).

Excavations conducted in the 1950s revealed:

- A well-organized settlement structure
- Pottery representing a distinct “Kot Diji culture”

- Cultural influence on the later Harappan civilization

It was also discovered that the site included a citadel and residential areas, indicating a structured and organized society (Directorate General of Antiquities, 2022).

## Construction and Historical Context

### Traditional View

According to many historians:

- The fort was constructed by Mir Sohrab Khan Talpur
- Construction period: 1785–1795 (The Express Tribune, 2023)

### Official and Scholarly Records

Official records suggest:

- The fort was built in the late 18th century
- It served as a political and military center of the Talpur rulers (Government of Sindh, 2015)

## Critical Perspective

A critical analysis suggests:

- The fort may have existed before the Talpur period
- The Talpurs may have only used or reinforced it
- British colonial records may have misattributed many historical structures

## Architectural Features

Kot Diji Fort:

- Is constructed on a hill
- Has natural defensive advantages on multiple sides
- Includes three main gates and strong bastions (Government of Sindh, 2015)

The fort also contained:

- Spaces for artillery
- Barracks for soldiers

- Residential quarters for rulers

These features indicate that it functioned as a complete military complex (The Express Tribune, 2023).

## Colonial Misinterpretation

After the British conquest of Sindh:

- Many forts were attributed to the Talpur rulers without proper investigation
- Gazetteers included uncritical historical claims

This trend has significantly affected the accuracy of regional historiography and calls for re-evaluation.

## Modern Research and Challenges

Recent studies indicate:

- Administrative and preservation challenges at the site
- Lack of tourism infrastructure (Fatima et al., 2023)

Additionally:

- Visitors have reported insufficient development facilities (Fatima et al., 2022)

## Conclusion

Kot Diji Fort and its associated mound represent an important continuum in the history of Sindh. The site connects:

- Pre-Harappan civilization
- Talpur-era history
- Colonial interpretations

Therefore, it is essential to:

- Apply modern scientific methods
- Promote unbiased historical research

so that the true history of the site can be recognized at a global level.

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## Kot Gulam Shah Fort

Kot Gulam Shah Fort, located in Qambar Taluka of Qambar Shahdadkot District in

Sindh, Pakistan, stands as a modest yet historically significant example of indigenous fortification. Though largely forgotten in mainstream heritage discourse, its architectural features and cultural associations offer valuable insight into localized defense strategies and settlement patterns in rural Sindh.

## Geographic Setting and Structural Layout

The fort is situated approximately 8 kilometers from Qambar city, along the Miro Khan–Qambar road, nestled between the villages of Hilila and the Tapu of Ranoti. Constructed from odaki mati (baked clay), the fort is square in shape, with each side measuring 188 feet. The original wall thickness at the base was 7 feet, though erosion has reduced it to approximately 1.3 feet. The average wall height remains around 15 feet, reinforced externally by evenly spaced buttresses in the same clay style (Wikipedia, 2025).

At each of the four corners, large bastions were constructed, each with a diameter of 20 feet. These bastions contain internal passages, suggesting that the fort’s defense relied primarily on elevated positions. Notably,

embrasures (firing slits) are found only within the bastions, not along the main walls, indicating a concentrated defensive strategy.

## Entrance and Interior Features

The fort has a single entrance on the eastern side, measuring 12 feet in width. Unlike larger forts, it lacks flanking towers or additional defensive structures near the gate. Today, the interior has been repurposed as a graveyard, with the shrine of Pir Gulab Shah constructed after the fort's abandonment. The northern side contains remnants of a small pond (landhi), likely added in a later period. A well once existed on the western side for water supply, though it has since collapsed (UKEssays, 2015).

Artifacts such as pottery shards and coins have been discovered within the fort, suggesting its historical use as a settlement or outpost. Because the fort is built atop a mound, it remains relatively protected from seasonal flooding and saline soil (sam kalir). Oral traditions indicate that the clay used for construction was sourced from a pit north of the fort, still referred to by

locals as “Miran jo Katab” (the pit of the Mirs).

## Cultural Context and Preservation

Kot Gulam Shah Fort exemplifies vernacular architecture adapted to local geography and material availability. Unlike monumental forts of the Mughal or Talpur periods, its modest scale and clay construction reflect community-based defense mechanisms. Despite its historical and cultural value, the fort remains undocumented in official heritage registers and is at risk of further erosion and neglect.

The fort’s location within Qambar Shahdadkot District—a region formally established in 2004 after separation from Larkana District—adds administrative relevance to its preservation. The district itself has faced challenges in heritage management due to limited resources and political fragmentation.

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# Lahari Bandar: (Jaki Bandar)

## Introduction

Lāhrī Bandar, locally also known as Jāki Bandar or Juna Shāh Bandar, was one of the most prominent historical ports of Sindh, located in present-day Mirpur Sakro, Thatta district. This port has been mentioned in historical sources since the 11th century CE (Al-Biruni, 1910). For centuries, Lāhrī Bandar retained significance as a hub of commerce, politics, and cultural exchange.

## Etymology of the Name

Various historical sources record different names for Lāhrī Bandar. Al-Biruni referred to it as *Lohāri* (Al-Biruni, 1910), while Ibn Battuta described it as *Lāhrī* (Ibn Battuta, 1929). The Turkish

admiral Sidi Ali Reis mentioned it as *Bandar Lāhrī* or *Diuli Sind* (Sidi Ali Reis, 1557/1899). Portuguese sources called it *Diul Sind*, and records of the English East India Company mention it as *Lerī Bandar* (Eaton, 1993). Scholars suggest the name may have derived either from the *Lāhrī River* or the local term *Lār* for the deltaic region of Sindh (Ansari, 1984).

## Economic and Commercial Significance

Ibn Battuta described Lāhrī Bandar as "a beautiful town on the shore of the great sea," visited by merchants from Yemen, Persia, and other regions, enhancing its prosperity (Ibn Battuta, 1929). During the Mughal era, this port became a key revenue center. After the annexation of Sindh in 1591 CE, Emperor Akbar formally incorporated it under Mughal control (Eaton, 1993). In the reign of Shah Jahan, it was noted that the port could accommodate nearly a thousand ships simultaneously (Manucci, 1907).

Arab and Persian ships carried dates, pearls, incense, and horses in exchange for sugar, cloth, coconuts, and other commodities, further underlining the

port’s role in international trade (Manucci, 1907).

## European Traders and Historical Accounts

By the 16th and 17th centuries, Lāhrī Bandar became a focus of European commercial interests. The Portuguese, followed by the English and the Dutch, competed for control. The *Tārīkh-i-Tāhirī*, a 17th-century Sindhi chronicle, provides details of Portuguese raids on Thatta and its connection to Lāhrī Bandar (Tahiri, 1657/1979). English traveler Thomas Fremlyn, in 1635, described his reception at the port by the *Shahbandar* (harbor master), who was responsible for customs duties and managing foreign traders (Fremlyn, 1635/1909).

## Archaeological Remains

Archaeological surveys reveal that the site of Lāhrī Bandar covers nearly 4 square kilometers in the deltaic region. A square-shaped fort with walls measuring about 3 meters in height and 1.7 meters in thickness has been discovered. The fort contained 12 bastions, one large gateway, and

foundations of administrative or residential structures.

Findings of Chinese porcelain, ceramics, and local pottery fragments indicate the presence of a prosperous society with access to luxury goods, reflecting its role in international trade (Khan, 2002).

## Conclusion

Lāhrī Bandar was one of Sindh's most important ports, maintaining commercial and political significance from the early Islamic period to the era of European maritime expansion. Historical sources and archaeological evidence affirm its role as a vital hub of local and global trade.

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# Luni Kot

**Abstract:**
Located southeast of Hyderabad on the right bank of the Nai Baran stream, Luni Kot is a historical fort attributed to the Talpur dynasty. This article explores its geographic setting, etymology, structural design, defensive bastions, and gate architecture—highlighting its historical significance and construction techniques.

## Geographic Setting and Name Origins

Luni Kot lies approximately 27 kilometers from Hyderabad, along the Karachi-bound Super Highway. After crossing the Nai Baran bridge, a dirt road leads southeast for 5 kilometers to the fort’s remains. Nearby lies Bolhari, and further downstream, Nai Baran merges into the Indus River.

Locals suggest the name “Luni” may derive from the area's saline groundwater (“Loon” meaning salt). Alternatively, it may stem from “Roon” or “Rooni,” referring to land eroded by water flow—indicating a linguistic evolution tied to the region’s hydrology (Sindhiana, 2020).

## Structural Design and Materials

The fort’s foundations still form a visible square outline on the ground. Excavated and reinforced, the walls were built with both white and black stone. These foundations remain distinguishable due to their color contrast with surrounding soil. In places, stone is clearly visible, suggesting deliberate material selection.

The walls and bastions were reinforced with wooden mesh: layers of wood were laid horizontally, filled with clay, and bound with pegs. This technique ensured structural integrity. The fort measures 156 feet in length and 150 feet in width, enclosed by an 8-foot-thick perimeter wall (Sindh Heritage Board, 2021).

## Bastions and Defensive Strategy

Luni Kot features five bastions: four at each corner for surveillance and one additional bastion guarding the entrance. These bastions protrude outward in elegant circular form. Each has a diameter of 15 feet and a circumference of 56 feet. Currently, only 3 feet of their height remains intact, indicating significant erosion over time (Thahim, 2021).

## Gate Architecture and Access

The fort has a single entrance facing east toward the Nai Baran stream. Two bastions flank the gate, forming a protective embrace. Southeast of the gate, a wall extends northward for 70 feet, ending in a large semicircular bastion measuring 56 feet in circumference. Between this bastion and the eastern gate lies a narrow passageway—likely designed for controlled access and defense.

## Conclusion

Luni Kot’s square layout, layered construction, and strategic bastion placement reflect the Talpur dynasty’s emphasis on fortified architecture. Its current state calls for archaeological documentation and conservation efforts. The fort’s integration of wood, stone, and clay showcases regional ingenuity in adapting to environmental conditions and defensive needs.

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# Malaki Kot

**Abstract:**
Malaki Kot, attributed to the disciples of Pir Mahmoodani known as the Miyan or Mulin Potas, is a historic site located in the southeastern coastal region of Sindh. This article explores its historical associations, geographic location, architectural layout, and its likely role as a trade post or watch station rather than a military fortification.

## Historical Association

According to local traditions, Malaki Kot is linked to the disciples of Pir Mahmoodani, referred to as Miyan or Mulin Potas. During the conflict between the Kalhoras and the ruler of Dhoraja, Rana Arjun, several loyalists stood by Arjun until the end. Among them was his maternal cousin Rahmatullah Mulin Poto, who remained steadfast alongside other Miyan Potas. This association positions Malaki Kot as a symbol of resistance and loyalty.

## Geographic Location

Malaki Kot is situated at 24.30°N latitude and 67.26°E longitude. Approximately four kilometers to its northwest lie the ruins of the historic Lahari Bandar (also known as Jaki Bandar). The fort is accessible by land, especially from the town of Gharo to the east, though the route involves crossing several saline water channels.

The western side of the fort appears to have served as a mooring site for boats and ships, indicating its strategic placement for trade. Nearby landmarks include “Khati Kun” about three kilometers northeast, and remnants of

“Hangoran” and “Thaman” further in the same direction—suggesting a rich hydrological and ecological history.

## Architectural Layout

Malaki Kot is an irregular, multi-cornered structure that can be divided into four sections:

- Three sections appear to have served as residential quarters or storage rooms.
- One central open area connects all parts and can be considered the fort’s courtyard.

The main entrance is located on the southeast side, adjacent to a series of rooms in the eastern section. On the western side, two smaller doors open outward near additional rooms. The fort contains only two bastions—one to the north and one to the south—each with a diameter of 28 feet. These bastions likely functioned as elevated watchtowers rather than defensive structures.

## Trade and Surveillance Function

The layout and limited number of bastions suggest that Malaki Kot was not built for warfare. Instead, it likely served as a small outpost or warehouse where goods arriving via river or sea were stored under the watch of guards. Its proximity to water routes and Lahari Bandar supports the hypothesis that it was part of Sindh’s coastal trade infrastructure.

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# Manora Fort

## Abstract

Manora Island, located at the entrance of Karachi Harbour, has historically served as a strategic maritime defense point. This paper examines the historical evolution, architectural design, and military significance of Manora Fort from the 15th century to the British colonial period. Drawing on primary accounts of Arab navigators and British surveys, the study highlights the fort’s role in safeguarding maritime trade routes and its transformation under colonial military engineering. The research contributes to understanding the maritime heritage of Karachi and the evolution of coastal fortifications in South Asia.

## Introduction

The coastal city of Karachi has long been a vital hub for maritime trade and naval activity. Among its key defensive structures, Manora Fort stands out due to its strategic location and historical continuity. Built on Manora Island, the fort played a crucial role in controlling access to Karachi Harbour. This paper explores the fort’s origin, development, and transformation across different historical periods.

## Historical Background

Historical evidence suggests that the existence of Manhuro Kot dates back to at least the 15th century. The famous Arab navigator Sulaiman ibn Ahmad al-Mahri makes a detailed description of the area in his book Al-Minhaj al-Fakhir fi Ilm al-Bahr al-Zakhir. (al-Mahri, 1970)

Al-Mahri referred to Karachi as “Karashi,” reflecting phonetic adaptation in Arabic. He also documented nearby islands used for anchorage, indicating the long-standing maritime importance of the region (Ferrand, 1925). These accounts imply that Manora Island was already recognized as a navigational and possibly fortified site.

## Geographical and Strategic Importance

According to Commander Carless, Manhoro Kot was located at 24°47′ N latitude and 67°00′ E longitude (Carless, 1838). The fort was built on an elevated position, from which the entrance to the harbor could be completely overlooked.

The surrounding Arabian Sea provided natural protection on three sides, while the northern approach was secured through man-made defensive structures. Such a location made the fort ideal for monitoring and controlling naval movement.

## 4. Architectural Features

Manora Fort was designed using principles of military engineering suited to coastal defense:

- Quadrangular layout with corner bastions
- Thick stone walls
- Cannon emplacements with embrasures
- Watchtowers

According to Shabbir Ahmed, the fort also included internal passageways, staircases, and storage areas, reflecting a complex defensive system (Ahmed, n.d.).

## Talpur Period and Renovation

During the late 18th century, Mir Karam Ali Khan Talpur ordered the restoration of the fort in 1797. This renovation strengthened the structure amid increasing regional instability and maritime threats. The Talpur rulers recognized the importance of Manora as a defensive gateway to Karachi.

## British Conquest and Reconstruction

The strategic importance of Manora Fort became evident during the British capture of Karachi. British naval forces attacked the fort, with HMS Wellesley leading the bombardment that resulted in its destruction.

Following their victory, the British undertook reconstruction efforts:

- Demolition of the old structure (1890)
- Use of rectangular stone blocks filled with earth and rubble
- Addition of modern artillery placements
- Strengthening of walls and defensive features

These modifications reflect the transition from traditional to colonial military architecture.

## Discussion

Manora Fort illustrates the evolution of coastal defense systems in South Asia. Its early existence, as referenced by Arab navigators, highlights the importance of indigenous maritime knowledge. The Talpur renovations demonstrate regional political priorities, while British reconstruction marks the introduction of modern military engineering.

The fort’s layered history provides insight into changing defense strategies, technological advancements, and geopolitical shifts in the region.

## Conclusion

Manora Fort remains a significant symbol of Karachi’s maritime heritage. Its strategic location, Strong construction, and historical transformations underscore its

importance as a coastal defense structure. Future research may focus on archaeological investigations and preservation efforts to further understand its historical significance.

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# Mansurah Port

## Introduction

Among the cities founded during the Islamic period of Sindh, Mansurah emerged as one of the most significant political, military, and commercial centers. After the departure of Muhammad bin Qasim, the weakening political structure of the Arab administration was reorganized under Hakam bin Awan Qalbi, who laid the foundation of this city (Khan, 1981). Mansurah not only became the capital of

Sindh but also a global hub of trade and intellectual activity.

## Foundation and Architectural Importance

Amr bin Muhammad bin Qasim, under the command of Hakam bin Awan Qalbi, established “al-Mansurah” between 723 and 738 CE, two miles away from Brahmanabad. The name “al-Mansurah” means “the place of victory” (Al-Baladhuri, 1916). The city, covering a square mile, was encircled by branches of the Indus River, making it constantly accessible to trading ships. A fortified wall surrounded the city, with four gates: Bab al-Basrah, Bab Turan, Bab Sindan, and Bab Multan (Al-Muqaddasi, 1887).

## Military and Political Importance

Mansurah was heavily fortified and militarily strong. According to al-Mas‘udi, the city housed around 40,000 soldiers, along with 80 war elephants (Al-Mas‘udi, 1967). This military strength secured its role as the capital of Sindh, with boundaries stretching from Debal to Alor.

## Social and Religious Life

The people of Mansurah were known for their piety, hospitality, and intellectual character. Al-Bishari describes them as devout, charitable, and courteous (Al-Bishari, 1873). Ibn Hauqal emphasizes the absence of immorality and alcoholism, while al-Idrisi highlights the prevalence of modesty and justice in governance (Ibn Hauqal, 1938; Al-Idrisi, 1992).

## Economic and Commercial Significance

Mansurah became a major commercial hub of the medieval period. Trade links connected it with Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Gujarat, Makran, Khurasan, China, and Sumatra (Istakhri, 1870). Al-Idrisi considered it comparable to Baghdad and Mesopotamian centers in terms of wealth and trade. Local production included dates, sugarcane, rice, citrus fruits, and mangoes (Al-Idrisi, 1992). Its leather goods, especially shoes, were highly valued in Baghdad, Egypt, and Africa (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 1898).

## Intellectual Significance

Mansurah was also a center of scholarship. It hosted prominent Islamic institutions and was the site of the first

Sindhi translation of the Qur’an (Khan, 1981).

## Decline and Ruins

By the mid-13th century, shifts in the Indus River’s course led to Mansurah’s decline. Today, its ruins lie in Sanghar District’s Sinjhoro Taluka, excavated by the Department of Archaeology (Department of Archaeology, Pakistan, 1975).

## Conclusion

Mansurah represented a remarkable political, commercial, and intellectual center of Islamic Sindh. Its influence stretched beyond the subcontinent, leaving a lasting mark on trade, culture, and knowledge.

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# Marot Bandar

## Introduction

The ancient Fort Marot was located on the banks of the Hakra River. According to historical accounts, the fort was originally built by Raja Mehrot, the ruler of Chittor. As recorded in the *Bahawalpur Gazetteer*, an inscription on the fort's gate read:
"Samvat 1548: Parakhi Pohan Suri Marot Patha Malik Jam Somra Kot Paki Khel Pharai"
(Bahawalpur Gazetteer, n.d.),
which indicates that the fort later came under the control of Jam Somra, who renovated it around 1491 CE.

## Religious and Architectural Significance

The fort's mosque was commissioned by the Mughal emperor Akbar the Great, reflecting the architectural and religious

patronage of the Mughal period (Bahawalpur Gazetteer, n.d.).

## Commercial Importance

Due to its location along the main highway connecting Multan and Delhi, Fort Marot served as a key stopover for trade caravans. The route passed through Hansi and Sirsa before reaching Marot. Minhaj al-Din, author of *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, writes:
“Marot is a small town, fortified, and located between Delhi and Uch” (Minhaj al-Din, ca. 13th century).

## Decline and Political Transition

The drying of the Hakra River led to the decline of Marot’s prosperity, though its strategic importance remained intact. In 1749 CE, Nawab Mubarak Khan of Bahawalpur seized the fort from the Raja of Jaisalmer and brought it under his control (Bahawalpur Gazetteer, n.d.).

## Conclusion

Fort Marot stands as a testament to Sindh’s historical trade routes, religious architecture, and strategic defense systems. Its layered history—from Rajput origins to Mughal patronage and

Bahawalpur conquest—makes it a vital subject for further historical and archaeological research.

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# Meena Nagar

## Introduction

Among the historic ports of Sindh, Meena Nagar stands out as a significant and ancient center—not only for its commercial importance but also as a reflection of Sindh’s cultural and political legacy. Located in the region of Laar, this port was established by the Meena community (Pathan, 1992).

## Etymology and Environmental Context

The word “Meen” in Sindhi means “fish,” indicating the area’s aquatic landscape and its association with fishing. Dr. Mumtaz Pathan notes, “Meen was a place of lakes and marshes, where

fishing was abundant” (Pathan, 1992, p. 45).

## Commercial Significance

Meena Nagar served as a major trading hub in Laar, exporting goods such as grain, rice, sesame oil, butter, muslin, cotton textiles, and cotton to the port of Barygaza (Shidai, 1984). According to the Greek historian of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, Meena Nagar was located behind the port of Banbhore. Goods unloaded at Banbhore were transported via river routes to the royal court of Meena Nagar (Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, ca. 1st century CE).

## Political Landscape

During the Parthian era, Meena Nagar was governed by a prince or governor who oversaw trade and administration. The port remained active even during the campaign of Alexander the Great, underscoring its strategic and economic importance (Pathan, 1992).

## Archaeological Remains

To this day, remnants of Alexander’s campaign, foundations of ancient encampments, and large wells remain

preserved in Meena Nagar, bearing witness to its historical grandeur (Shidai, 1984).

## Conclusion

Meena Nagar was not merely a commercial port—it was a vital chapter in Sindh’s civilizational, political, and cultural history. Its study reveals the depth of Sindh’s ancient riverine trade, international connections, and aquatic heritage.

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# Nandkot

## Introduction

Among Sindh’s historical heritage sites, Nandkot holds a prominent place—not only for its connection to folklore but also for its architectural design, defensive structure, and residential planning. This article explores the historical background, geographical location, architectural features, and civilizational importance of Nandkot.

## Historical Background

Nandkot is attributed to Raja Nand, who is famously known in Sindhi folklore as the father of Momal Rani. Raja Nand belonged to the Gujjar caste and ruled over Mirpur Mathelo during the 15th century CE (Sindhiana, 2012). The fort reflects the political and cultural conditions of its time, where local governance, religious life, and defensive arrangements coexisted.

## Geographical Location

Nandkot is located in the Jati taluka of Sujawal district, on the southern side of the Jati–Korwah road, along the right bank of the Begna canal. Its ruins lie approximately 9 kilometers northeast of Jati town (Sindhiana, 2012). In older maps, the area is shown near the shrine of revered Mughal saints, indicating its religious significance.

## Architectural Structure

Nandkot is rectangular in shape, with its northern and southern sides being longer. Its towers are oval-shaped and protrude outward from the walls, suggesting a strategic defensive design. The fort’s surface lies about one foot

above the current ground level, indicating its antiquity. Three towers are still visible today, and according to local traditions, the fort originally had four gates, two of which remain identifiable (Memon, 2021).

## Religious and Residential Arrangements

Inside the fort, remnants of a mosque have been found, measuring 34 feet in length and 24 feet in width—evidence of religious life within the fort. Additionally, traces of rooms and grand mansions suggest that Nandkot was not merely a military stronghold but also a residential and cultural center (Memon, 2021).

## Conclusion

Nandkot is a vital part of Sindh’s historical legacy, reflecting its folklore, architectural ingenuity, and civilizational depth. Preserving and researching this site can enhance historical awareness and strengthen Sindh’s cultural identity.

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## Nasarpur Port

### Introduction

Among the historical cities of Sindh, Nasarpur occupies a prominent position. The city not only served as a commercial and military center but was also an important hub of knowledge, mysticism, and culture. Its historical evolution reflects various political, economic, and cultural aspects that make Nasarpur a significant site in Sindh’s history.

## Historical Background

Nasarpur was founded during the reign of Sultan Firoz Tughlaq of Delhi in 752 AH, on the bank of Sāgar Lake (Qureshi, n.d.). At the time of its establishment, a fort was also constructed, where Nasr Khan was stationed with a thousand horsemen, while Malik Bahram was appointed as the military governor of the region (Qureshi, n.d.). This shows that the foundations of Nasarpur were laid with both administrative and military considerations in mind.

## Economic and Commercial Importance

Due to its proximity to the Indus River, Nasarpur was a fertile and prosperous region. Consequently, its population continued to grow with the passage of

time (Qureshi, n.d.). During the eras of the Arghuns, Tarkhans, and Kalhoras, the city emerged not only as a military base but also as a commercial hub. Mian Muhammad Muradyab Kalhoro even celebrated his coronation in the gardens along the Indus River in Nasarpur, indicating the city's political and cultural prominence.

## Nasarpur as a Port

According to historian Qureshi Hamid Ali Khanai, in earlier times, the Indus River flowed close to Nasarpur, making it an active river port. It served as a point for anchoring boats, loading and unloading goods, and accommodating travelers in purpose-built inns (Qureshi, n.d.). From Nasarpur, goods were transported by river to Thatta, and from there to other parts of the country. This establishes Nasarpur as one of the busiest and most significant ports of its time.

## Conclusion

Nasarpur's role as a military base, commercial hub, and cultural center grants it an important place in the history of Sindh. The city was not only central to trade and military activities but also served as a venue for

significant political and cultural events. Its identity as a river port highlights its contribution to Sindh’s economic and maritime history.

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# Naukot Fort

## Introduction

Naukot Fort is a significant part of Sindh’s historical heritage, located approximately 63 kilometers southeast of Mirpurkhas. The fort is notable not only for its architectural layout but also for its defensive planning and residential arrangements, which reflect its role as a civilizational center.

## Geographical Location

Naukot Fort is situated at 24° 0′ North latitude and 69° 9′ East longitude. Structurally, the fort is square-shaped, with its northern and southern walls measuring 66 feet in length, and its eastern and western walls extending 318 feet (Sindhiana, 2012).

## Architectural Structure

The fort is surrounded by a 12-foot-wide wall, equipped with two staircases that allowed guards to ascend. A total of nine bastions were constructed for defense:

- Two bastions flanked the royal gate and its adjacent watchtower
- Four bastions were placed at the corners of the fort
- Three additional bastions were built along the northern, southern, and western walls (Ansari, 1996)

The royal gate was once secured with a strong wooden door. Beyond the gate lies a square-shaped watchtower measuring 48 by 40 feet, leading to the inner gate and the fort’s interior.

## Defensive and Residential Features

Near the southern wall, a domed chamber was constructed—believed to have been used for storing gunpowder. Similar barrel-vaulted chambers are also found outside the southern wall. Along the northern wall, remnants of residential quarters have been discovered, including collapsed plastered walls and built-in storage

cabinets.
Both the royal and inner gates are flanked by arched guard rooms, indicating a well-planned security system (Ansari, 1996).

## Conclusion

Naukot Fort stands as a testament to Sindh’s architectural ingenuity, strategic defense, and civilizational depth. Preserving and studying this site not only enhances historical awareness but also strengthens the cultural identity of Sindh.

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# Nerun Kot

This article examines the relationship between Sindh’s largest fort “Ranikot” and the “Nerun Kot” mentioned in historical texts. Ancient Arab geographers, the *Chach Nama*, and other historical sources refer to Nerun Kot, whose features correspond to the present-day Ranikot. Modern researchers Rasheed Bhatti and Badar Abro have also linked Ranikot with Nerun Kot. The article evaluates historical references, architectural style, and scholarly opinions, concluding with an emphasis on the need for carbon dating and archaeological research.

## *Introduction*

In Sindh’s history, forts and castles have been symbols of defense, politics, and culture. Among them, Ranikot is the

largest fort, about which debate continues: is it the same Nerun Kot mentioned in historical texts? Some English writers identified the Hyderabad fort as Nerun Kot, but modern scholars believe that the real Nerun Kot is the present Ranikot.

## ***Methodology***

This article is based on historical sources, ancient texts, and modern scholarly writings.

- **Primary sources**: *Chach Nama*, *Tareekh-e-Masoomi*, *Tareekh-e-Tahiri*, *Tuhfat-ul-Kiram*.
- **Secondary sources**: Rasheed Bhatti's article (*Mehran Journal, Ranikot Number*), Badar Abro's book (*Diwaar-e-Sindh*).
- **Comparative analysis**: Comparing ancient descriptions (walls, spring, pastureland) with the geographical and architectural features of present-day Ranikot.

## ***Discussion***

- **Ancient references**: Al-Baladhuri and Ibn Hauqal's maps show Nerun district and Nerun Kot near Sehwan

and Sindh. In *Chach Nama*, Muhammad bin Qasim's letter describes a fort resembling present-day Ranikot.

- **Scholarly opinions**: Both Rasheed Bhatti and Badar Abro identify Ranikot as Nerun Kot.
- **Misunderstanding**: The identification of Hyderabad fort as Nerun Kot created historical confusion, but it lacks the features described for Nerun Kot.
- **Later construction**: During the Talpur era, some walls inside the fort were rebuilt, but the foundations are much older.

## ***Conclusion***

From historical references and scholarly opinions, it appears that present-day Ranikot is indeed the Nerun Kot mentioned in historical texts. However, the current structure was reconstructed during the Talpur period, while the foundations are ancient. For a definitive conclusion, carbon dating and archaeological research are essential to determine the fort's original age and period.

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**Oranga Bandar**

## Introduction

Oranga Bandar holds a significant place in the maritime and port history of Sindh. Its earliest traces are found in 1060 AH (*Tazkira-i-Amir Khani*) and around 1650 CE (as recorded in *Thatta for Centuries*). Located at *Pakhar Seer* in Taluka Jati, the port served as a hub of commercial, religious, and political activities during different periods (Amirkhani, 1650).

## Foundation and Settlement

According to historical accounts, Oranga Bandar was founded by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir around 1650 CE. At that time, *Hazrat Ibrahim, also known as Mian Ghous al-Baghdadi al-Hamawi al-Darai*, who brought a sacred hair relic of the Prophet Muhammad  to Sindh, settled here. His descendants initially lived in Daira (until 995 AH/1586 CE) but later moved to Oranga in 1012 AH/1603 CE (*Thatta for Centuries*).

## Religious and Social Importance

Oranga Bandar was not only a commercial hub but also a center of spiritual attraction. Several Sufi shrines and mausoleums were established here,

including those of *Pir Lakho, Qazi Qutbuddin, Haji Qaim, and Gul Shah*.

**Role in International Trade**
When Alexander Hamilton visited Sindh in 1699 CE, he noted that Busta Bandar and Oranga Bandar were the principal ports of the region. The Mughal rulers, especially Aurangzeb, issued strict orders that merchants and seafarers must anchor their ships only at the new port of Oranga. Alamgir even launched his own ships for private trade (Hamilton, 1720).

**Decline and Ruin**
Oranga Bandar remained active until the era of Ghulam Shah Kalhoro. However, in Rabi al-Thani 1172 AH (December 1758 CE), he established *Shahgarh* and *Shah Bandar*, leading to the abandonment of Oranga Bandar. The local inhabitants were resettled in the newly founded towns (Amirkhani). Even by 1941, the ruins of the city were reported to be in relatively good condition (*Thatta for Centuries*).

**Significance**
The establishment of Oranga Bandar was primarily aimed at controlling internal uprisings through maritime routes and generating commercial

revenue. It represents a crucial chapter in Sindh’s maritime and economic history, reflecting the Mughal rulers’ strategic approach to trade and politics.

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**Pari Nagar**

## Abstract

Pari Nagar, once a thriving international port located in the Thar region of Sindh, flourished along the banks of the Hakra River from the first century CE. This article explores its historical, cultural, and commercial significance, tracing its rise through riverine trade and its decline due to seismic shifts and political invasions. The study situates Pari Nagar within the broader context of Sindh’s river-based civilizations and highlights its role in global maritime networks.

## Historical Context

Civilizations have historically flourished along riverbanks, and Sindh’s cultural and archaeological heritage owes much to its riverine settlements. The Hakra River, distinct from the Indus, once flowed independently from the Siwalik ranges near Ambala, irrigating Bahawalpur, Bikaner, and eastern Sindh before emptying into the sea near Lakhpat (Zamin, 1984). This river transformed arid regions like Tharparkar

into lush landscapes, supporting dense forests and wildlife such as elephants, lions, and rhinoceroses (Rathore, 1962).

## Pari Nagar as a Port City

Pari Nagar was located approximately 14 miles from Nagarparkar, near the Viyar Wah stream. During the first century CE, it had an estimated population of 40,000, including Jain merchants, blacksmiths, Rajputs, and other communities (Shaidai, 1952). Ships anchored at Dhotar, and the port facilitated trade in grains, cotton, lac, honey, and salt with Southeast Asian islands like Java and Sumatra. In return, spices such as cardamom, cinnamon, and black pepper were imported (Rexon, 1874).

## Cultural and Religious Heritage

The city was predominantly inhabited by the Jain community, known for their wealth and devotion. Temples abounded, including a grand shrine dedicated to Parsvanatha, a Jain Tirthankara, which hosted annual fairs

attracting pilgrims from Gujarat and India (Shaidai, 1952). The nearby port of “Gori ja Dehra” was also a center of religious and commercial activity.

## Causes of Decline

Two major events led to the downfall of Pari Nagar:

1. A devastating earthquake in the 10th century caused the sea to recede, forming the Rann of Kutch and halting maritime traffic (Zamin, 1984).
2. In 1226 CE, Delhi’s Muslim armies attacked and destroyed the city, forcing its merchant class to relocate to Bhodesar (Rexon, 1874).

## Conclusion

Pari Nagar stands as a vibrant chapter in Sindh’s maritime history. Its strategic location, flourishing trade, and religious significance made it a beacon of civilization. Though now in ruins, its legacy endures in the cultural memory

and archaeological remnants that continue to echo its former glory.

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# Patal Port


## Abstract

Patal Port was one of the most significant ancient maritime and commercial centers located at the mouth of the Indus River in present-day Thatta District, Sindh. Closely associated with the Indus Civilization and the Solar (Suryavanshi) dynasty, the port is mentioned in Greek, religious, and British historical sources. This research paper examines the geographical location, historical background, role during Alexander the Great’s invasion, commercial and religious significance, dynastic associations, and archaeological remains of Patal Port.

The study concludes that Patal was a key node of ancient international trade linking Sindh with Egypt, Persia, and the Mediterranean world.

## 1. Introduction

Sindh has historically been a land of riverine and maritime civilizations. The Indus River not only supported agriculture and urban life but also facilitated long-distance trade through its ports. Among these, Patal Port holds exceptional importance due to its strategic location at the Indus Delta and its frequent mention in classical and colonial historical accounts. This research paper aims to present a critical historical analysis of Patal Port and its role in ancient regional and international trade networks.

## 2. Geographical Location and Historical Background

Patal Port was located near the mouth of the Indus River in what is now Thatta District, Sindh. Classical Greek historians recorded that at this point the Indus

divided into two major branches before flowing into the Arabian Sea. The land enclosed between these branches was known as *Patalene* (McCrindle 331).

Due to its strategic deltaic position, Patal Port served as an interface between inland riverine trade and maritime routes. Scholars associate the port with the early phase of the Indus Civilization and connect it with the Solar (Suryavanshi) dynasty, indicating its antiquity and political relevance.

## 3. Patal Port during the Campaign of Alexander the Great

In 325 BCE, Alexander the Great reached the Indus Delta during his Indian campaign. Greek historians such as Arrian and Strabo describe Patal as a well-established city and port at that time (Strabo XV).

Alexander recognized the strategic value of Patal and ordered the construction of a harbor and dockyard to support his naval fleet. From Patal, his forces launched naval expeditions along the Indus River and into the Arabian Sea. This confirms the port’s military,

administrative, and commercial importance during the Hellenistic period.

## 4. Commercial and Religious Significance

Major General Haig, in *The Indus Delta Country*, states that during the era traditionally associated with Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), ships from Egypt sailed to the Indus Delta and anchored at Patal Port (Haig 19). Although this reference blends historical tradition with religious narrative, it strongly suggests the antiquity of long-distance maritime trade involving Sindh.

Patal Port functioned as a gateway through which Sindh maintained trade relations with Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, and the Mediterranean world. Commodities transported through this port likely included textiles, spices, timber, precious stones, and agricultural products.

## 5. The Solar Dynasty and Aksho Iko

According to General Haig, the Aksho Iko clan inhabited Patal Port, and Aksho Iko was the first ruler of the Solar dynasty associated with this region (Haig 20). He is described as being married to “Ila,” the sister of Gautama Buddha, indicating the port’s association with early dynastic rule and religious history.

This evidence suggests that Patal Port was not merely a commercial center but also a political and dynastic seat of power in ancient Sindh.

## 6. Archaeological Remains and Present Condition

Today, the remains of Patal Port are believed to lie submerged near Sirkaani Creek, close to Keti Bandar and Shah Bandar. Due to changes in the Indus Delta and sea encroachment, the port gradually disappeared beneath the sea. However, during low tides, traces of ruins are occasionally reported, offering tangible evidence of Sindh’s ancient maritime heritage.

## 7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Patal Port was one of the most important ancient maritime and commercial centers of the Indus region. Its strategic location, association with the Indus Civilization, role during Alexander the Great's campaign, and references in Greek and British historical literature highlight its global significance. Patal Port stands as a testament to Sindh's early integration into international trade networks and remains a symbol of its maritime legacy.

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## Patala Port

### Introduction

Among the ancient centers shaped by the Indus River, **Patala Port** occupies a

remarkable position. Situated on the banks of the Indus, it was not only a hub of commerce and navigation but also a city of religious and cultural importance. Ancient Indian, Arab, and Greek sources all mention Patala with significant detail (Baladhuri, 1916).

## Etymology of the Name

According to Dr. Mumtaz Pathan (1963), the name *Patala* is derived from the word *Pota*, meaning boat or vessel. Since this city was famous for seafaring ships, it came to be known as Patala. Some historians, however, argue that the word originates from *Patachala*, meaning a flat plain or a raised plateau (Cunningham, 1871).

## Geographical Location

Al-Baladhuri (1916) in *Futuh al-Buldan* states that Patala was situated on the western bank of the Indus, between *Debal* and *Mansura*. Al-Idrisi (1154/1970) confirms that the city stood on the bank of the Mehran, serving as a crossing point for trade routes between Debal and Mansura. The Chinese traveler Xuanzang, who visited in 471 CE, described the city as built upon a

hill, covering an area of about three and a half square miles (Beal, 1884).

The Greek geographer Ptolemy located Patala at the mouth of the Indus delta near the town of Osaakana (Ptolemy, 150/1932). However, later European historians such as McMurdo, Cunningham, and others incorrectly identified it with Nerun Kot (modern Hyderabad) (McMurdo, 1834).

## Political and Military Importance

In 327 BCE, when Alexander the Great invaded Sindh, Patala was the capital of the *Laar* province, which included present-day Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Badin, and Hyderabad. Its ruler was *Mokris*, belonging to the Maurya dynasty (Arrian, 1893). The ruling Sogdian tribe organized their political system in a Spartan-like manner, where experienced tribal elders held authority, while military responsibilities were shared between two noble families (Smith, 1886).

## Commercial and Cultural Significance

Patala was one of the busiest ports of ancient Sindh. Maritime and riverine

trade flourished there. Ibn Hauqal (1873) places the city between Debal and Mansura on his map. Al-Idrisi describes the city as small but densely populated, with a strong fortress known as the “Fort of the Infidels” (Al-Idrisi, 1154/1970).

## Conclusion

Patala was a vital commercial, political, and cultural hub of Sindh in antiquity. Yet, its exact geographical identification remains debated. Some historians equate it with Nerun Kot, others with Hyderabad, while some place it at a different site within the Indus delta.

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# Rahmki Bazaar

## Introduction

Rahmki Bazaar was one of the prominent ports of Sindh that retained its significance as a riverine harbor for nearly eight to ten centuries. Located in present-day Diplo Taluka of Tharparkar district, near the edge of the Rann of Kutch, the site is situated about three meters above sea level. Today, only a small settlement exists at the site, while

traces of the ancient flow of the river *Puran* are still visible nearby (Banerji, 1929).

## Geographical and Social Background

The foundation of this harbor is historically linked with the settlement of the Rahman community, which continues to reside in the regions of Laar and Thar. Since ancient times, the Indus River has frequently altered its course, and one of its important channels was the *Puran*. R. D. Banerji, in his geographical study of the Indus, identified several channels including the Puran, which flowed into the Rann of Kutch and ultimately into the Arabian Sea (Banerji, 1929; Stein, 1942).

## The Puran River and Port Significance

The Puran channel had two major courses:

1. **Eastern Puran**: Flowing through Tharparkar, passing near Rahmki Bazaar, and emptying into the sea through the Rann of Kutch.
2. **Western Puran**: Flowing through Badin and Jhuddo regions, later

merging with the Eastern Puran before reaching the Kori Creek.

The fertile lands of Kutch, such as Lakhpat, flourished due to the water of Puran, which sustained agriculture in the region (Qureshi, 1992).

Three major ports were situated along the Puran River: Ali Bandar, Rahmki Bazaar, and Sindhri. Additionally, the famous Soomra capital, Waggh Kot, was located only five miles away from Rahmki Bazaar (Khuhro, 1999).

## Commercial and Port Role

Ports along the Rann of Kutch often functioned as frontier outposts. Their responsibility included monitoring trade routes and collecting customs duties on goods arriving through both maritime and riverine routes. Rahmki Bazaar served a similar role. A new settlement emerged near this outpost that functioned primarily as a trade center, where local and foreign merchants exchanged goods. This settlement gradually became known as a “bazaar,” eventually gaining recognition as Rahmki Bazaar (Asher, 1984).

## Decline

The prosperity of Rahmki Bazaar lasted until the mid-18th century. During the reign of Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, the Indus River altered its course, which resulted in the drying up of the Puran channel. With this shift, the commercial and port activities ceased, and Rahmki Bazaar was reduced to a small rural settlement (Burton, 1877).

## Conclusion

Rahmki Bazaar represents an important site in the commercial history of Sindh. It was not only a significant trading hub but also a frontier checkpoint between Sindh and Kutch. However, the alteration in the Indus River's course and the drying of the Puran stream led to its decline.

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# Rakhan Bandar

## Introduction

In the history of Sindh, several ports and towns connected with the Indus River played a crucial role in regional as well as international trade and cultural exchange. Among these, **Rakhan Bandar** holds a distinguished position. Located in **Jam Pur Puran branch** within Dadu Taluka, this town and port was once a flourishing hub of commercial, social, and cultural life (Irani, n.d.).

## Geographical and Historical Background

Rakhan city and port were repeatedly affected by the changing course of the Indus River. Historical accounts suggest that the settlement was **destroyed seven times by floods** but was reestablished after each disaster. The final destruction occurred when the **Jam Pur Puran channel** engulfed the

settlement. Presently, the remains of this site are located in **Deh Kacho Rup, Circle Pat** (Siddiqui, n.d.).

## Economic and Trade Importance

### Local Production and Exports

Rakhan Bandar served as a lifeline for trade in ancient Sindh. Locally produced goods exported from this port included:

- Agricultural products: oil, ghee, cotton, pulses, tobacco, and grain.
- Livestock and related products: cattle and camels.
- Other goods: lac, saltpeter, copper, camphor, pottery, timber (from talhi tree), salt, fish, mats, musical instruments, carpets, and fruits.

These goods were transported to **Shah Bandar**, from where they were shipped to India (Irani, n.d.).

### Imported Goods

The port also received valuable commodities from outside, including:

- Gold, silk fabric.
- Camel saddles, horse harnesses.

- Cloth for sails (boran), timber from deyal and cheel trees.
- Spices, jaggery, sugar, ship sails, and leather products.

These imports not only supported the local economy but also linked Sindh with international markets.

## Social and Political Importance

Lutfullah Irani in his *Safar-e-Sindh* notes that during the Talpur rule, when the British army was allowed to pass through Sindh, the army traveled from Karachi to Kotri, then to Sehwan, and finally reached **Rakhan Bandar**. As it was the day of Eid, Muslim soldiers in the army offered **Eid prayers at Rakhan village** (Irani, n.d.). This reference highlights the socio-political significance of Rakhan Bandar.

## Agricultural and Horticultural Development

The lands of Rakhan city were fertile and highly productive. Along with grains, horticultural crops held a key place. Molvi Roshanuddin Siddiqui in *Pat Purani* mentions that on the western bank of **Jam Pur Lake**, there were gardens of pomegranates, which were exported

through Rakhan Bandar to **Thatta and Nagar** (Siddiqui, n.d.).

## Conclusion

Rakhan Bandar was one of the most important ports in ancient Sindh that played a central role in the region's economic history. It facilitated both exports of local products and imports of valuable foreign goods, which enriched Sindh's society and culture. Although changes in the Indus River eventually led to its decline, Rakhan Bandar remains a memorable chapter in Sindh's trade, politics, and agriculture.

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## Ranikot

Ranikot Fort, commonly known as the Great Wall of Sindh, is one of the largest forts in the world and is located in the Kirthar Mountains of Sindh province, Pakistan. Despite its magnificent size, the fort has still received little scholarly attention, and various theories exist about its origin and purpose.

The Indus Valley and its surrounding regions have been centers of urban civilization, defensive construction, and cultural exchange since ancient times. Ranikot Fort, situated near the modern

village of Sann in Jamshoro District, reflects all these trends. Built on walls approximately 30 kilometers long, the fort is often compared to the Great Wall of China (Khan, 2008). However, unlike its Chinese counterpart, the origin and purpose of Ranikot remain disputed (Ahmed, 2001).

## The Name of Ranikot

Regarding the name of Ranikot, historians and researchers have expressed different opinions. According to Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Baloch, Ishtiaq Ansari, and some other writers, the word “Rani” derives from *Roni*, *Ron*, or *Ran*, which carry the meaning of flowing water. Local people believe the name was given because of the seasonal stream of water that flows near Ranikot.

On the other hand, Dada Gangaram Samrat and respected scholar Atta Muhammad Bhanbhro argue that the original name was “Rani Kot,” connected to “Rani Dahshala.” They claim that during the Mahabharata period, the powerful Sindhi king Jai Derath’s wife, Rani Dahshala, built the fort, and over time “Rani Kot” became “Rani Kot.”

## Historical Background

The exact date of Ranikot's construction has not yet been determined. Some researchers attribute it to the Sassanian period (224–651 CE), since remains of a Zoroastrian fire temple have been found near the Sann Gate (Sheikh, 2010).

The *Chachnama* records that Muhammad bin Qasim came to this fort and wrote a letter to Hajjaj bin Yusuf, in which he described Ranikot as the largest fort in the world. Inside the fort are cemeteries from the Arab and Roman periods, as well as Buddhist remains, indicating that the fort predates the Arabs. Historical sources suggest that this mountainous region of Sindh was the last frontier of Iran, and the Sassanian rulers built forts and strongholds here (Ansari, 2009; Abro, 2010).

## Cultural and Archaeological Significance

The remains inside the fort—such as ancient cemeteries, watchtowers, and religious sites—show that the area was inhabited and used for centuries. One cemetery contains more than 300 graves, some of which are in the

*Chaukhandi* style, reflecting a fusion of local and Islamic funerary traditions (Qureshi, 1999).

Thus, Ranikot Fort is not merely a defensive structure but a cultural and symbolic monument, an essential part of Sindh's regional identity. In the present day, the fort has become a center of cultural pride and tourism and is often called the living museum of Sindh (Khan & Jatoi, 2016).

## Conclusion

Ranikot Fort is a unique historical and architectural manifestation in South Asia. Although its size and cultural importance are highly prominent, scholarly consensus about its origin and purpose is still lacking. More interdisciplinary research—including archaeological excavations, geographical surveys, and historical analyses—could help to clarify the mysterious past of this grand monument.

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# Rano Kot

## Introduction

Rano Kot, located near Mirpur Sakro in the village of Dhandhi within the Laar region of Sindh, stands as a significant symbol of Sindh's historical heritage. The fort's geographical placement, architectural design, and historical context reflect the region's evolving political and environmental landscape. This article presents an academic overview of Rano Kot's geographical location, structural features, and historical background.

## Geographical Location

Rano Kot is situated at 24.29° N latitude, positioned between the Arabian Sea and the riverine flows of the Indus Delta. To the west lies the deltaic region of the Indus River, where the historic port of Dharaja once operated (Sindhi Heritage Board, 2021). Archaeological traces of early water channels found to the north of the fort suggest its ancient origins and strategic importance.

## Historical Background

Historically, Rano Kot was part of the Dharaja principality, ruled by the Nangamars. The last ruler, Queen Arjun, was assassinated during the Kalhora period by Bajhar Jokhio, marking the end of the Nangamar dynasty (Shaikh, 2018). Rano Kot served as Queen Arjun’s residence, and the nearby Dharaja port functioned as a major commercial hub. Excavations have revealed remnants of Chinese ceramics, glassware, and terracotta, indicating vibrant trade activity.

## Architectural Features

The fort is constructed in a square layout, with each side measuring approximately 325 feet. The walls are on average 12 feet thick and built using red sandstone and lime plaster (Archaeology Department of Sindh, 2020). Rano Kot features seven bastions —four at the corners and three along the sides. These bastions are oval in shape, with diameters of 24.6 feet in length and 22.6 feet in width. At the center of the fort, the remains of a well suggest its use as a residential site.

## Cultural and Academic Significance

Rano Kot is not only an architectural marvel but also a vital reference point in the historical continuity of Sindh. Its proximity to a historic port and its association with political transitions make it a valuable subject for academic research. The fort stands at the intersection of geography, politics, and culture, offering insights into Sindh's layered past.

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# Raor Fort

## Abstract

Raor Fort, located in Badin District, Sindh, is a historical site attributed to the Hindu period. Scholars believe it was constructed by Raja Chach as a summer residence. It is also the battlefield where Muhammad bin Qasim defeated Raja Dahir, marking the beginning of Muslim rule in Sindh (Sindhi Encyclopedia, n.d.).

## Historical Context

- The fort lies approximately seven miles south of Kharhi Bhandari.

- The Raini River once flowed nearby, enhancing its strategic value.
- The site is referred to as “Raor” in the Chachnama, a key historical chronicle (Chachnama, as cited in Jang, 2021).

## Architectural and Cultural Significance

- Raja Chach built the fort for seasonal residence.
- The decisive battle between Muhammad bin Qasim and Raja Dahir occurred here.
- Later, the village of Wano Pir developed at the site, historically known as Raor (Sindhiana, n.d.).

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## Rato Kot (Sanghar)

### Introduction

Situated in the arid landscape of Sindh, Rato Kot is not merely an ancient fortification—it has long served as a strategic hub for riverine trade,

waterway transit, and cultural exchange. Located in Deh Khajani of Taluka Khipro, on the left bank of the Nara Canal at R.D455, the fort's remnants lie buried beneath layers of earth (Sindhi Heritage Board, 2022).

## Etymology

There are varied local interpretations regarding the origin of the name "Rato Kot." Some researchers suggest that "Rato" was the name of a person after whom the fort was named. Others believe the name derives from the reddish hue of the soil and ruins found at the site (Memon, 2019).

## Historical Background

Mentions of Rato Kot appear in historical records from the Soomra, Samma, and Tarkhan periods. Due to its location along a river channel, the site has served as a port and waterway for centuries, facilitating boat traffic and trade (Shaikh, 2021). Its geographic position made it a vital node in Sindh's historical transport network.

## Architectural Features

Originally constructed in a square layout, the fort’s structure has eroded over time due to rain, storms, and natural decay, now resembling a rounded mound. Each wall of the fort measures approximately 600 feet in length, with a base thickness of 12 feet. Entryways are visible on the northeast and southern sides. Five bastion markers have been identified, including a prominent collapsed bastion east of the main northern gate (Khoso, 2020).

## Archaeological Materials

Excavations at Rato Kot have revealed three types of bricks:

- Large baked bricks
- Small baked bricks
- Unbaked (mud) bricks

These materials reflect the construction techniques and local craftsmanship of the time (Jatoi, 2023).

## Conclusion

Rato Kot stands as a vital chapter in Sindh’s desert history—an intersection of defense, commerce, and culture. Its

incomplete map, buried ruins, and oral traditions echo the voices of a distant past. Preserving this site demands scholarly attention, literary advocacy, and administrative action.

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# Rohri Port

## Introduction

Rohri is among the historically significant towns of Sindh, with human settlements dating back to prehistoric times. Archaeological evidence and historical narratives indicate that this land has remained a hub of human civilization since the Stone Age. Due to its location along the Indus River, Rohri evolved as a vital center of trade, industry, and culture throughout history.

## Prehistoric Remains

Henry Cousens in his *Antiquities of Sindh* notes the discovery of prehistoric caves and settlements in Rohri (Cousens, 1929). Similarly, Sir John Marshall asserts that the remains of Neolithic dwellings are located in Laki, Kirthar, and the Rohri Hills (Marshall, 1931). H. T. Lambrick further argues that long before the Indus Valley Civilization, a people migrated from the west and settled in Rohri Hills (Lambrick, 1964).

## Etymology and Linguistic Background

According to the *Gazetteer of Sindh*, Rohri was also referred to as "Lohri," attributed to the Lohar (blacksmith) community (Gazetteer of Sindh, 1876). G. E. West described the ancient name as "Loharkot." Molai Shaidai suggested that "Rohri" derived from the word "Rori," meaning a small stone or hillock (Shaidai, 1934).

## Historical Context

When the Indus River changed its course in 954 CE, the displaced inhabitants of Alor migrated to Rohri (Q. Beg, 1919). Mirza Qaleech Beg also affirmed this view. Raverty (1878) described that during floods, the Indus River would flow fifty feet below the city walls, highlighting Rohri’s ancient urban settlement.

## Rohri During Mughal and Later Periods

During the Mughal era, when Prince Aurangzeb ordered the execution of his brother Dara Shikoh, Rohri was already a thriving city (Lambrick, 1964). Its inhabitants were actively involved in

resisting foreign invaders and defending their homeland.

## Trade and Industry

Joseph Salbanke, who visited in 1608 CE, described Rohri as the principal town of Upper Sindh, inhabited by industrious people engaged in the trade of cotton cloth, indigo, and other goods (Salbanke, 1608). The construction of the Sukkur–Rohri Bridge in 1889 by the British enhanced railway connectivity and boosted trade (Gazetteer of Sindh, 1876). The city was further connected with Quetta and Pishin, solidifying its role as a commercial hub.

## Testimonies of Travelers

Prominent travelers such as Ibn Hauqal, Al-Idrisi, and Abu’l-Fazl praised Rohri’s gardens, fruits, fish, and trade (Al-Idrisi, 1154/1892). The Portuguese traveler Maner (1241) described Rohri as the "Garden of Sindh." William Finch (1610) also observed that Rohri’s cotton textile, known as "Daryai cloth," was popular among Iranian and Khorasani traders.

## Decline

According to Pottinger and Postans, during the rule of the Talpurs, misrule and exploitation forced wealthy merchants to abandon the city, leading to its decline (Pottinger, 1816; Postans, 1839).

## Conclusion

The historical trajectory of Rohri reveals its evolution from a Stone Age settlement into a flourishing commercial hub during Islamic, Mughal, Kalhora, and Talpur periods. Its strategic location on the Indus made it a center of trade and industry. Despite periods of decline, Rohri has remained a significant landmark in the historical and cultural landscape of Sindh.

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# Samoi

## Introduction

In the political and cultural history of Sindh, the shifting of capitals has always been of great importance. From the Soomras to the Sammas, several cities rose as centers of power and later declined. Among these historical sites, **Samoi** stands out as a significant capital, once situated near Thatta and Makli.

## Establishment and Importance of Samoi

During the Soomra dynasty, their capitals included “Wagh Kot” and “Muhammad Tur.” However, due to internal conflicts, particularly the rivalry between Dodo and Chanesar, these cities were destroyed (Mirza, 2004). Later, when the Sammas established their rule over Sindh, they founded Samoi as their new capital.

According to historical accounts, Samoi was located about one and a half *koh* (approximately three miles) from Thatta, north of the Makli hills. At that time, the Indus River also flowed near the site, which made it a convenient location due to easy water accessibility (Bajan, 1998).

## Traditions Regarding Its Foundation

In *Tuhfat-ul-Kiram*, it is mentioned that Jam Babini founded the city (Khuddo, 1879/1950). However, another tradition attributes its foundation to Bhanbhini (Bhanbhi) bin Anar, who established it during the reign of Firoz Tughlaq (790–791 AH) (Ansari, 1983). When the Sammas took control of Sindh, they fortified Makli and named the settlement Samoi.

## Spiritual and Religious Significance

Samoi was not only a political capital but also a spiritual center. The traditions and prophecies of the "Mamoi faqirs" are associated with this region. The shrine of **Sheikh Jhandi Patni** and the sacred site of the **Seven Sisters** are also located here, reflecting its Sufi and folkloric importance (Hussain, 2001).

## Decline and Abandonment

When Jam Nizamuddin Nanda (1461–1508 CE) shifted his capital from Samoi to Thatta, the importance of Samoi declined. Gradually, the city was

deserted and eventually became completely abandoned (Sharif, 1992).

## Conclusion

Samoi was a prominent capital in the history of Sindh, holding both political and spiritual significance. Today, it survives only as a small village, but its historical and cultural legacy remains an integral part of Sindh’s heritage.

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# Sarni Kot

## Introduction

Sarni Kot is a historic fort located in Taluka Moro of Naushahro Feroze District, situated within Survey No. 444 of Union Council Manahi. The fort lies in a deteriorated state, approximately four kilometers from the town of Sadhujah, along the road leading to Nawan Jatoi, adjacent to the Doti (Nathar) Canal. The ruins are clearly visible from the roadside, and several villages are settled to its east and southwest (Sindhi Heritage Board, 2022).

## Etymology of the Name

The name “Sarni Kot” carries multiple layers of meaning. One local legend tells of a beautiful woman named Sarni who fell in love with a king of her time. Linguistically, “Sarni” may derive from the Sindhi word “Sar,” meaning “elevated” or “central,” referring to the fort’s raised location. In Sanskrit, the word *śaraṇa* means “refuge” or “shelter.” Some scholars suggest that “Sarni” evolved from *śaraṇa*, implying protection, sanctuary, or a place of safety. In Sindhi, expressions like “taking sarṇ” (seeking refuge) and “sarṇ bhūt” (spirit seeking shelter) are still in use (Memon, 2019).

Researchers believe that Sarni Kot dates back to the periods of Rai dynasty and Brahmin rule over Sindh.

## Architectural Structure

The fort is rectangular in shape, with its north-south walls longer than the east-west ones. It stands atop a raised mound, ascending in four stepped layers, each about four feet high. This elevation places the fort approximately 15 feet above the surrounding farmland,

covering an area of seven acres. The north-south wall measures 390 feet, while the east-west wall is 270 feet long. Before erecting the walls, the foundations were dug 24 feet wide and filled with coal and other materials for reinforcement. A 10-foot-wide base wall was then constructed, tapering as it rises. The entire perimeter consists of double walls—one behind the other—without the use of baked or unbaked bricks, nor any wooden reinforcements (Khoso, 2020).

## Defensive Features

The fort includes four corner bastions, typical of traditional Sindhi forts. These bastions are still standing and have a wide circular base, resembling the footprint of a camel. Each bastion’s foundation spans 70 feet. Strategically placed outside the main walls, they allowed defenders to monitor approaching threats. The fort has a single entrance on the eastern side, measuring 12 feet wide, protected by a solid defensive outpost (Jatoi, 2023).

## Religious Significance

At the heart of the fort lies a Buddhist stupa, slightly offset to the northwest of

the central axis. Surrounding the stupa are remnants of residential structures, indicating that the site was not only defensive but also religious and civic in nature (Shaikh, 2021).

## Conclusion

Sarni Kot represents a vital chapter in Sindh’s civilizational history—a convergence of defense, sanctuary, and spiritual harmony. Its linguistic richness, architectural complexity, and Buddhist associations make it a unique historical site. Preserving and researching Sarni Kot demands renewed scholarly, literary, and administrative attention.

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## Sehwan Fort

### Abstract

Excavations at Sehwan Sharif Fort have revealed a continuous sequence of cultural, political, and artistic developments in Sindh. Between 1996 and 2002, French archaeologist Madame Monique Kervran uncovered eight distinct strata, of which the lower three belong to the pre-Islamic period and the upper five to various phases of the Islamic era (Kervran, 2002). This paper presents a detailed analytical study of these strata, their characteristic artifacts, and the evolution of ceramic and architectural traditions at the site.

## Introduction

Sehwan Fort has traditionally been recognized as a defensive structure, yet its archaeological record demonstrates that it functioned as a living laboratory of civilization for over two millennia. Rising to approximately 54 meters and spanning some 17 hectares, the fort yielded strata dating from circa 400 BCE to the 18th century CE (Kervran, 2002). The lowest levels produced Graeco-Bactrian, Mauryan, Kushan, and Rai Dynasty artifacts, indicating both regional political changes and far-reaching cultural exchanges. This study aims to review these finds and assess

their significance for understanding Sindh’s long-term cultural trajectory.

## Pre-Islamic Strata

1. Graeco-Bactrian Stratum
   Excavation’s deepest layers yielded Black Polished Ware pottery, testifying to Graeco-Bactrian influence in the region (Bukhari, 1998).
2. Maurya–Kushan Stratum
   Immediately above, red polished vessels and coinage attributable to the Mauryan and later Kushan periods were uncovered, reflecting continuity in administrative and trade practices (Bukhari, 1998).
3. Rai Dynasty Stratum
   Overlying these was the first moulded pottery phase and Rai-Dynasty copper coins, indicating sophisticated local governance and an established urban community (Bukhari, 1998).

Together, these three strata chart a cultural continuum from the Graeco-Bactrian arrival (c. 400 BCE) through indigenous dynasties up to roughly 700 CE.

## Islamic Period Strata

Annabel Collett’s ceramic chronology identifies five successive Islamic-period levels (Collett, 2008):

- **Stratum IV (8th–10th centuries CE):** Early Islamic slip-wares with simple cylindrical forms, reflecting the patronage of the Abbasid and early regional Islamic polities.
- **Stratum V (11th–13th centuries CE):** Under Ghaznavid and Ghurid rule, fine Red Slip Ware became widespread; structural remains show incipient stone carving and decorative motifs.
- **Stratum VI (13th–15th centuries CE):** During the Delhi Sultanate and Samma periods, moulded pottery dominates. Architectural embellishments include refined friezes and intricate intaglio work.
- **Stratum VII (16th century CE):** The Arghun and Tarkhan rulers introduced glazed tiles in vibrant hues; gates and mihrabs feature elaborate calligraphic and geometric designs.
- **Stratum VIII (17th–18th centuries CE):** Mughal-era contributions appear in polychrome floor tiles, marble inlays, and silver-

leaf ornamentation, reflecting the imperial iwan style and pietra dura techniques.

These five levels demonstrate uninterrupted innovation in ceramic technology and architectural aesthetics across a millennium of Islamic rule.

## Evolution of Ceramic and Architectural Traditions

The material culture at Sehwan Fort traces a clear trajectory from rudimentary slip-wares to sophisticated glazed tiles and pietra dura. Innovations in clay sourcing, glaze recipes, and kiln engineering enhanced both craftsmanship and structural ornamentation. Trade networks introduced new materials and techniques, while local artisans adapted them to Sindhi tastes and climatic conditions (Collett, 2008).

## Conclusion

Sehwan Fort stands as more than a military bastion; it is a palimpsest of Sindh’s evolving civilizations. Its eight excavation strata—spanning some 2,500 years—offer a singular, continuous record of cultural exchange, political

change, and technological innovation. Future research employing advanced geophysical and bioarchaeological methods could illuminate buried environmental and agrarian contexts, deepening our understanding of this pivotal site and informing its preservation.

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# Shah Bandar


## Abstract

Shah Bandar, now a subdivision in Thatta District, was once the most prominent port of Sindh during the Kalhora era. This article explores its foundation, commercial rise, engagement with the East India Company, and eventual decline due to environmental shifts. It highlights Shah Bandar’s strategic location, its role in international trade, and its cultural and intellectual significance.

## Historical Background

Founded by Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro in 1659 CE, Shah Bandar replaced the earlier trading port of Oranga Bandar, established by Prince Aurangzeb in 1646 CE. Ghulam Shah also built a fort at Shah Bandar, remnants of which still exist (Zamin, 1984).

## Geographical Location and Trade Importance

Located at the mouth of a branch of the Indus River, Shah Bandar was ideal for maritime commerce. According to the Sindh Gazetteer, it lay on the eastern bank of the Malir River (Chhano, 1972). Merchants from Kutch and Bhati regions traded with Basra, Bandar Abbas, Hormuz, Muscat, and Bahrain, making Shah Bandar a hub of regional and international exchange (Shaidai, 1952).

## East India Company’s Presence

In 1758 CE, Mian Ghulam Shah granted the East India Company a trade license, exempting them from import duties. By 1761 CE, the Company had established a factory at Shah Bandar, and in 1775 CE, a salt refinery was built, processing 10,000 maunds annually. The Company paid only 1.5% in duties, making it a highly profitable venture (Rexon, 1874).

## Intellectual and Medical Life

Due to its temperate climate, Shah Bandar attracted scholars and professionals. Akhund Abdul Fattah was a renowned scholar, and Haji Mahmood served as the Company's appointed physician for its staff (Shaidai, 1952).

## Decline and Legacy

In 1819 CE, land subsidence and a shift in the Indus River's course led to the port's destruction. Trade routes moved to other ports like Vikur Bandar. Alexander Burnes noted that Shah Bandar and Vikur were key trade centers during his 1831 expedition (Burnes, 1834).

## Conclusion

Shah Bandar was not only a commercial center but also a cultural and intellectual hub. Its strategic location, visionary leadership, and global trade links made it a vital chapter in Sindh’s maritime history. Though now in ruins, its legacy remains etched in the historical memory of the region.

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## Sukkur Port

### Introduction

Sukkur, located on the right bank of the Indus River, is one of the oldest urban settlements of Sindh. Archaeological evidence suggests that this region has remained inhabited since the Stone Age, as stone tools and other remains have

been discovered from the riverbed and nearby hills (Newbold, 1846). Therefore, Sukkur holds a significant place among the ancient sites of Sindh in terms of culture and commerce.

## Ancient Background

The antiquities found in Sukkur are not only comparable to those of other Indian sites but also bear resemblance to the artifacts of ancient Mexico (Blanford, 1876). Historians maintain that Sukkur was a flourishing settlement as early as 700 BCE, when the Sodha rulers governed this area, contributing to its development and construction (Shaikh, 1990).

## Islamic and Arab Period

Following the Arab conquest of Sindh, Sukkur also came under their control. Due to the extreme heat of the region, the Arabs began to call the city “Saqar” (Ansari, 2005). During the Islamic era, Sukkur remained an important center of trade and communication.

## Commercial Importance

Sukkur served as a vital hub for trade, through which goods were transported to northern India and Central Asia. Fish was one of its chief exports, preserved by drying and sent abroad. Barbosa (1516/1989) mentioned the abundance and high quality of Sindh’s fish in his travelogue. During the Mughal and Kalhora periods, Sukkur continued to thrive as a center of trade and industry, particularly noted for dyeing and indigo production (Sleeman, 1844).

## Shipbuilding and Caravans

Sukkur housed shipbuilding facilities, while at Miyani, wooden boats were constructed. Caravans from Central Asia reached Sukkur, from where goods were shipped via the Indus River to the delta ports, connecting Sindh to the international trade routes (Elliot, 1877).

## Kalhora and Mughal Periods

During the Kalhora era, ghee was produced in large quantities and transported from Sukkur to Thatta. Under the Mughals, Sukkur remained an important commercial hub, but after the

death of Aurangzeb in 1707, political unrest and invasions severely disrupted trade activities (Khan, 1994).

## Colonial Period and Modern Trade

With the arrival of the British, Sukkur emerged as both a military and commercial center. The establishment of a railway line in 1858 and the operation of the Indus Flotilla Company’s steamers between Karachi, Kotri, and Multan enhanced Sukkur’s role in commerce. The Lansdowne Bridge, constructed in 1889, opened a direct trade route between Sukkur and Kandahar, further consolidating its strategic position (Burton, 1851).

## Social and Cultural Significance

Sukkur was not only a commercial hub but also a cultural center, known for its lush gardens, date orchards, and sugarcane cultivation. Its fame for sugar (gur) earned it the title of a “sweet city.” Both Mir Qane and Sir Richard Burton praised Sukkur as a cultural and scenic city, emphasizing its beauty and hospitable society (Qane, 1825; Burton, 1851).

## Conclusion

Historically, Sukkur was one of the most important commercial, cultural, and military centers of Sindh. Being a river port, it played a central role not only in Sindh’s economy but also in linking India and Central Asia with international markets. Though the advent of railways reduced Sukkur’s status as a river port, its historical, cultural, and social significance remains vital even today.

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# Sundri Fort


## Abstract

This academic article examines Sundri Fort as a key component of Kalhora-era military strategy in Sindh. Located between Sindh and Kutch, the fort served as a border outpost established by the Kutch rulers. In 1762, Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro launched a military campaign against Rao Lakha of Kutch, capturing Sundri Fort en route. The event was not only a result of political tension but also a

demonstration of Sindh’s frontier defense strategy (Qanboh, 1768/2007).

## 1. Introduction

Sindh’s historic forts are not only architectural marvels but also hold political, military, and cultural significance. During the Kalhora dynasty—especially under Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro—border forts played a vital role in the state’s strategic planning (Qanboh, 1768/2007).

## 2. Sundri Fort: Geopolitical Background

Sundri Fort was located 30 miles from Lakhpat and 20 miles from Ali Pur, where the Kutch government had established a border checkpoint. The fort became a symbol of political tension between Sindh and Kutch, particularly after Poncho Seth’s grievance reached Mian Ghulam Shah (Qanboh, 1768/2007).

## 3. Mian Ghulam Shah’s Military Campaign

According to *Tuhfat-ul-Kiram*, on October 28, 1762, Mian Ghulam Shah marched toward Kutch with his army.

Poncho Seth accompanied him, having been accused by Rao Lakha of illicit relations with the ruler’s mother. This accusation sparked a political and personal conflict, leading Ghulam Shah to attack Kutch and capture Sundri Fort, where he established a strong garrison (Qanboh, 1768/2007).

## 4. Strategic Importance and Impact

The capture of Sundri Fort strengthened Kalhora control over the frontier. It was not only militarily significant but also extended Sindh’s political influence into Kutch. The event exemplifies Kalhora-era governance and border management (Sindhi Encyclopedia, n.d.).

## 5. Conclusion

Sundri Fort was a critical element of Kalhora military strategy. Mian Ghulam Shah’s conquest resolved a political dispute and initiated a new phase of frontier defense. The fort remains a vital chapter in Sindh’s historical narrative, offering insight into its political foresight and military planning.

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**Tando Allahyar Fort**

Tando Allahyar Fort, founded by Mir Allahyar Khan Talpur in 1790 CE, once stood as a symbol of architectural grace and strategic foresight. Today, however, only fragments of this historic structure remain, with much of the fort demolished or encroached upon by private occupants. Despite its significance, neither the public nor governing authorities have made serious efforts to preserve it (Khanzada, 2025).

## Historical Background

Mir Allahyar Khan built the fort along the banks of the Sangri River to protect the newly settled town of Tando Allahyar. Its riverside location made it one of the most picturesque forts in Sindh. The fort was originally protected by four corner bastions and had a main entrance on the western side, flanked by the eastern and southern towers. It also served as a residential space for the Mir, although the exact layout and number of chambers remain unknown due to the absence of detailed records (Graana.com, 2024).

A well was reportedly dug inside the fort to supply water to its inhabitants, a common feature in Sindh’s fortified

settlements. However, the exact location of this well has been lost over time.

## Colonial Transformation and Decline

Following the British conquest of Sindh in 1843, the fort was seized and repurposed by colonial administrators. A British officer named David Arwing was buried within the fort, with his gravestone dated August 1, 1843. Unfortunately, the grave's location has since been lost to time (Wikipedia, 2025).

In 1854, when Tando Allahyar was designated a taluka, the fort's historical value was disregarded. Instead, a Mukhtiarkar office and police lockup were constructed within its premises—structures that still occupy the site today. The remaining portions of the fort continue to deteriorate due to official neglect and lack of preservation efforts (Khanzada, 2025).

## Cultural Significance and Economic Legacy

Mir Allahyar Khan was known for his spiritual inclinations, and the fort became a gathering place for Sufi

mystics and musical assemblies. In earlier times, Tando Allahyar gained fame for its silk dyeing industry. The city's patola textiles were renowned across regions, and local artisans—especially from the Khatri community—excelled in dyeing and weaving. Even today, the "Khatri Para" retains its historical identity.

Tando Allahyar's commercial vitality was supported by both land and water routes. Its ancient ports served as major centers for trade and exchange, linking it to broader economic networks across Sindh and beyond.

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## Umerkot Fort

Umerkot, historically known as “Amarkot,” stands as a vital landmark in Sindh’s civilizational landscape. The origins of this city are traced through various traditions, with most scholars agreeing that its foundations predate the 11th century CE (Harijan, 1980).

### Historical Background

According to *Tarikh-e-Rigistan*, *Amarkot Jo Itihaas*, and *Tod’s Rajasthan*, the early history of Amarkot remains partially obscured. However, some accounts

suggest that by the 6th century CE, the Parmar dynasty ruled the region. The Yaduvanshi ruler Mandam Rai of Ladhrawi and Pongal is said to have married the daughter of Parmar Raja Masodh of Amarkot (Harijan, 1980). In 997 CE (1054 Samvat), Raja Dhoni Barah of Marwar distributed nine forts among his nine brothers, with Amarkot allotted to the Parmars (Tod, 1829). Historical records from Jaisalmer further confirm that the Parmars continued to rule Amarkot into the early 11th century.

The fort itself is believed to have been constructed by Parmar Sodha rulers. It later came under the control of the Soomras for a brief period, and by 1226 CE, the Sodhas had reasserted their dominance (Harijan, 1980).

## Architectural Features

Umerkot Fort is located at 25.22° N latitude and 69.47° E longitude, strategically positioned on the edge of the desert along the main route from Jodhpur to Hyderabad. Defensive features include remnants of a surrounding moat. The entrance is flanked by two bastions, and above the gate is a symbol resembling a

sunflower. While some scholars associate this emblem with Umar Soomro’s coinage, Tejsingh Solanki argues that it is more likely a symbol of the Surya Vanshi Rajputs (Solanki, 1975).

The fort is rectangular in shape, with bastions at each corner. At its center stands a royal watchtower, which still houses six cannons. Within the fort lies a cruciform grave beneath a canopy supported by eight pillars, believed to belong to British Deputy Commissioner Mr. Watson.

## Cultural Significance

A museum has been established within the fort, showcasing artifacts from the Mughal era and the contemporary culture of Thar. Recently excavated Buddhist statues from Virawah, uncovered during roadwork on the Virawah–Nagarparkar route, have also been added to the collection (Sindh Department of Archaeology, 2022).

The legendary tale of Umar Marvi is intimately tied to this region, symbolizing Sindh’s literary and moral heritage. Moreover, the Mughal emperor Jalaluddin Akbar was born in Umerkot,

further cementing the fort’s place in South Asian history (Abul Fazl, 1590).

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## Unar Kot (Kiryen Kot)

Unar Kot, also known as Kiryen Kot, is located at 68°26′ East longitude and 24°36′ North latitude, within the village of Kiryen in Taluka Golarchi, District Badin. The remnants of this fort are

clearly visible about four to five kilometers from the Jati–Korwah road near the area known as Laghari Sim, specifically within survey numbers 456–449 of village Kiryen.

Researchers believe that Unar Kot was built during the Samma dynasty’s rule in Sindh (1351 CE to 1520 CE). The fort was named Unar Kot in reference to one of the main clans of the Sammas, called ‘Unar’.

## Elevation and Layout

The ruins of Unar Kot rise approximately 15 feet above the current ground level, suggesting that the fort was built atop a natural mound for strategic advantage. The fort spans roughly one and a half blocks (six squares), with each side measuring 800 feet. The corners of the fort form precise 90-degree angles, and the walls are aligned with cardinal directions—north, south, east, and west—indicating careful architectural planning.

## Construction and Interior Design

The craftsmanship of the bastions, their curvature, timber use, design, and dimensions reflect a consistent architectural style. From the ruins, it appears that the interior of the fort was thoughtfully planned, with buildings and facilities arranged systematically within the boundary walls. The walls were constructed using bricks on both the inner and outer surfaces, filled with compacted earth in between for reinforcement.

## Bastions and Defensive Features

The fort’s defense relied on 28 bastions. These bastions are notably larger than those found in many other forts across Sindh. Each bastion has a diameter of 48 feet and protrudes outward from the wall, forming a semi-circular shape. There are six bastions along each side of the fort, spaced approximately 70 feet apart.

## Gateways and Access

Traces of two gateways are found—one on the western side and another on the eastern side. The eastern gate is wide enough that even today, two bullock carts can pass through simultaneously,

indicating its use for significant movement and transport.

## Moat and Water Source

Evidence suggests that the fort was once surrounded by a moat. Remnants of this moat are still visible on the eastern side. Additionally, the Kiryen Lake adjacent to the fort remains filled with water to this day, which likely served as a vital water source for the fort’s inhabitants.

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# Venjhar

## Introduction

Venjhar was a historically significant town located in the Sakrand Taluka of Nawabshah District, east of the Mashāikh Shakh near the national highway leading from Sakrand to Qazi Ahmed. In ancient times, it lay approximately 13 kos (about 25 miles) from Sehwan and was inhabited by the Samija and Inar communities. According to *Mazhar-e-Shahjahani*, “This town was founded by the ancient Sindhi tribe known as Venjhar. It was situated on the edge of a lake, with the Indus River flowing west of it” (Mazhar-e-Shahjahani, ca. 17th century).

## Fortifications and Mughal Reoccupation

Venjhar housed a robust fort spread over 13 acres, surrounded by earthen walls and equipped with multiple gates. During the Mughal era, the Samija inhabitants were expelled, and the fort was reconstructed. Mughal forces,

including artillery units, were stationed there, and a gallows was erected to execute Sindhi warriors who resisted imperial rule (Mazhar-e-Shahjahani, ca. 17th century).

## Commercial and Strategic Importance

Due to its location on the riverbank, Venjhar became a bustling trade hub where boats frequently arrived laden with goods. Renowned researcher Qureshi Hamid Ali Khanai writes, “Venjhar was an ancient town of Lakhat Pargana in Sindh. It served as the riverine port of Lakhat and Khati Pargana. It was the main center for trade caravans and military movements. Agricultural produce and other goods from Lakhat and Khati Pargana were transported via this port to Gujarat and Kathiawar” (Khanai, n.d.).

## Decline and Ruins

It is said that Venjhar was destroyed during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. Invaders looted the town and set it ablaze. Even today, remnants of burnt homes and walls bear witness to its tragic end. The ruins now span approximately 30 acres. *Mazhar-e-*

*Shahjahani* records that the fort was constructed around 1009–1013 Hijri (1600–1605 CE) by Mir Abu’l Qasim Namkeen, the governor of Sehwan, near a branch of the Indus or an adjacent lake (Mazhar-e-Shahjahani, ca. 17th century).

## Conclusion

Venjhar’s legacy as a riverine trade port and strategic center of Lakhat Pargana reflects the vibrant commercial and political networks of pre-modern Sindh. Its ruins invite further archaeological and historical exploration to restore its place in the narrative of Sindh’s civilizational heritage.

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# Wajrot Port


## Abstract

Wajrot Port, located in northern Sindh along the banks of the Hakra River, was once a thriving ancient city that played a significant role in trade, culture, and civilization. The site is closely associated with the Indus Valley Civilization, and archaeological findings suggest that it stood parallel in significance to Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, and Brahmanabad (Cousens, 1929). This paper aims to explore the historical background, archaeological investigations, cultural importance, and eventual decline of Wajrot.

## Introduction

Sindh’s history is enriched with numerous ancient ports, cities, and cultural centers. Among them, **Wajrot Port** was a significant site situated near Reti Railway Station in District Ghotki. The ruins, spread over approximately 40 acres, consist of mounds rising 10 to 20 feet high. Scattered remains of baked bricks, pottery, charred wood, and other artifacts provide evidence of its antiquity and its role as a flourishing urban settlement (Qureshi, 1992).

## Historical Background

Wajrot Port was established along the Hakra River, a river that in different eras was known by several names such as Saraswati, Mubala, Ghaggar, Wahinda, and Puran (Lambrick, 1973). Historical texts refer to this city with different names including **Vajurta, Wanjhrot, Ronjh Kot, Wanjot, Vajnath, and Vajnrat**, though it is popularly remembered as “Wajrot.”

British archaeologist **Henry Cousens** in his *Antiquities of Sindh* (1929) stated that “Wanjhrot or Wanjath” was an ancient city located on the banks of the Hakra River, linked to the Indus Civilization. He recorded that ruins of the city exist about 5 miles south of Reti Railway Station and 63 miles north of Rohri (Cousens, 1929).

## Archaeological Investigations

Several British and European scholars, including **Beggott, H. G. Raverty, Henry Cousens, Dr. H. T. Sorley, and Lambrick**, studied and reported on the remains of Wajrot (Lambrick, 1973; Sorley, 1968).

Their investigations revealed:

- Bricks measured approximately 18 x 12 x 4 inches, strongly baked and reddish in color (Cousens, 1929).
- Pottery fragments were of high quality, glazed and painted.
- Copper and silver coins were discovered, weighing between 3 to 7 grains (Branfill, 1900).

- Children’s terracotta and stone toys, mostly in the shape of animals, were found.
- Iron nails, beads, bangles, ornaments, and household utensils were unearthed.
- The city contained a large central courtyard and luxurious residential houses for the elite, built with bricks and stones, comparable in construction to monuments in Ahmedabad (Cousens, 1929).

These findings demonstrate that Wajrot was a highly developed urban center, comparable in material culture to Brahmanabad and Mohenjo-Daro.

## Cultural and Civilizational Importance

Historians and archaeologists have placed Wajrot alongside **Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, and Brahmanabad**, marking it as an equally significant cultural hub (Qureshi, 1992). It served as a major trade route connecting Sindh with Punjab, Kashmir, Bahawalpur, Gilgit, and Chitral.

The site also holds importance in Sindhi folklore, particularly in the romantic tale of *Demman Sonari*, which is deeply tied to the cultural identity of Sindh.

## Decline

According to historical accounts, in 962 CE, a devastating earthquake changed the course of the Hakra River, leading to the destruction of the city (Bherumal, 1934). The decline accelerated with time, leaving behind only scattered mounds. Today, only a large mound remains, but modern agricultural practices and land use threaten its survival.

## Conclusion

Wajrot Port stands as an invaluable testimony to Sindh’s ancient history, culture, and civilization. As a crucial site of the Hakra Civilization, its preservation is vital to ensure that this cultural heritage is safeguarded for future generations.

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# Wakhar Bandar

## Introduction

Wakhar Bandar was a significant historical port located approximately twenty miles inland from the Arabian Sea, near the Indus River Delta. It was not only a bustling harbor but also home to a sizable village. In 1837, Commander Carless, while surveying the Indus Delta, identified Wakhar as an important port (Carless, 1837).

There is no definite information about when **Wakhar Bandar** was established, but this port was inhabited even before the era of the Soomras (1011–1351 AD) and the Sammas (1351–1520 AD).

## Naval Infrastructure and Defense

Ships would anchor near the Fort of Wakhar. One such vessel measured 28 by 27 feet and was equipped with fourteen cannons. It could carry up to 200 tons of cargo and was also used in combat. Locals referred to this type of ship as an *Armaat* (Carless, 1837).

## Economic Importance during the Talpur Era

Under the Talpur rulers, Wakhar Bandar held considerable economic significance. In 1836, the Talpur administration collected over one hundred thousand rupees in revenue from this port alone. Trade routes connected Wakhar to Mandvi, Anjar, Junagadh, Bombay, Porbandar, and Malabar, as well as to Sonmiani, Gwadar, and Muscat. Key exports included rice, ghee, and other goods (Sindh Archives, n.d.).

## Decline under British Rule

During British colonial rule, the port declined due to the drying up of the Jamrao branch of the Indus River. This environmental shift rendered Wakhar Bandar inactive and eventually led to its abandonment (Sindh Archives, n.d.).

## Conclusion

Wakhar Bandar was once a vibrant node in Sindh’s maritime and riverine trade network. Its strategic location, naval capacity, and commercial reach made it a vital part of Talpur-era Sindh. The port’s decline due to ecological changes

under British rule marks a significant turning point in the region’s economic history.

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